

Entry to Leadership: A Case Study of a First Year Principal in a Massachusetts School in Corrective Action

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Educational Administration

ENTRY TO LEADERSHIP: A CASE STUDY OF A FIRST YEAR PRINCIPAL IN A MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL IN CORRECTIVE ACTION

Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

ENTRY TO LEADERSHIP: A CASE STUDY OF A FIRST YEAR PRINCIPAL IN A MASSACHUSETTS MIDDLE SCHOOL IN CORRECTIVE ACTION

By

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This case study examined the demands that a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action faces and explored what are the key factors for creating a successful entry from the teachers' perspective. The study further identified what a first year principal's immediate priorities should be when entering the job and examined potential pitfalls.

This qualitative case study was conducted by the principal, who was a participant-observer. Data collection included the use of the on-line SurveyMonkey.com service, the researcher's reflective journal entries and field notes, as well as a review of pertinent documents.

Findings were many, and illuminated many insights for beginning principals, including the importance of taking the time to learn about the existing culture before attempting to change it, as well as cultivating relationships and carefully laying the groundwork for change.

Implications for practice included more specific recommendations, such as spending the summer months reading teacher files, comparing and compiling data on student performance, and being knowledgeable of all the school's initiatives for improving achievement before school officially begins. Limitation of this study included the researcher's role as principal and participant-observer, a small sample size, and the relatively short time frame within which the study was conducted.

Recommendations for future study included studying the perspectives of other key constituents, such as students, parents, and other community members, broadening the scope of the study to include other middle schools in Corrective Action, and conducting a longitudinal study that would document the professional socialization of a first year principal during the three-year period following her appointment.

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CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Foreward

Chapter one consists of an introduction and eight sections that provide a succinct synopsis of the researcher's study. Each chapter begins with a *Foreward* that outlines the make up of each chapter.

Hence, chapter one begins with an *Introduction* and provides a review of contemporary education reforms in the United States and details how they have impacted the role of the principal.

Section one puts forward the statement of the problem.

Section two defines the research question.

Section three imparts a key understanding of the pertinent and crucial literature related to this study, which includes the following: 1) the theoretical frameworks of administrator entry and its phases; 2) the studies and lessons on effective principal entry; 3) empirical studies on first year principals; and 4) the role of the principal in implementing change.

Section four states the research design.

Section five discusses the limitations of the study.

Section six defines key terms in the study.

Section seven expounds on the significance of the study.

Section eight concludes by providing an overview of chapters to come.

Introduction to Chapter One: A Recent History of Education Reform in the United States and Their Impact on the Role of the Principal

The education system in the United States has undergone a far-reaching transformation in the past twenty years. According to David P. Driscoll (2004), the Commissioner of Education for Massachusetts, the “true evolution of the nation’s public schools began in 1981” (p. 7) when former President Ronald Reagan directed then Secretary of Education T. H. Bell to begin a rigorous study of the status of public education in the United States, resulting in the formation of the Commission on Excellence in Education. Two years later in 1983, *A Nation at Risk* decreed that American schools were failing miserably (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 1983) and served as a “wake-up call” to the plight of the public education system.

These events gave rise to a series of educational mandates at the federal and state levels. In an effort to boost student performance for all groups and to address the issues of equity, equality, excellence, and achievement in all schools, state governments across the country began to implement accountability legislation to improve all schools, especially low-performing ones (Ravitch, 1999).

In the late 1980s, Kentucky became the first state to define its own approach to education reform by developing a comprehensive statutory system for assessing student achievement, teacher quality, and school and district accountability (Driscoll, 2004). Massachusetts soon followed, and in June of 1993, the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA) was passed. Colorado, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Washington also enacted legislative initiatives to change their systems toward a standards-based system. Alabama, Arkansas, and Florida adopted the six National Education Goals (initiated at the First National Education Summit in 1989) and codified them as their own state objectives. Connecticut, Maine, Vermont, and Virginia outlined their

state-level objectives in documents called the *Common Cores of Learning* (Medler, 1994). While reforms varied from state to state, three themes were central to these legislative efforts: 1) the use of high-stakes testing to measure the performance levels of students in each school; 2) the appropriation of federal and state funds to improve schools not meeting statewide rankings; and 3) the implementation of mechanisms for sanctioning schools failing to meet improvement goals (Houle, 2006). As a result of these state laws and their impending regulations, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 was signed into law, becoming the most comprehensive federal education reform initiative in U.S. history (USDOE, 2005).

The purpose of this reform was to improve student achievement and to change the culture of American's schools. Based on four principles, NCLB affords greater control and flexibility to local communities and school districts; provides more choices for parents; requires that states and districts implement program and practices based on sound scientific research; and establishes greater accountability for results (USDOE, 2004). This act requires that each state measure every public school student's progress in reading and math in grades 3 through 8 and at least once in grades 10 through 12. In 2007-2008, tests in science and history were under way (USDOE, 2005). These tests measure student achievement based on state standards and assess how well schools are educating students in English, math, science, and history.

As a measure of greater accountability, NCLB requires that states, districts, and schools present these test scores, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, English language proficiency, disability, and economic status, in annual district report cards. States must identify districts and schools that do not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in English and math. In 2007, to receive an affirmative AYP determination, the school or district must meet "a student participation requirement; an attendance or graduation requirement; and either the State's 2007

performance target or the group's own improvement target" (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MADESE], 2007d, p. 1).

Under NCLB, increasing sanctions are placed on schools and districts for each consecutive year that they fail to make AYP in the same subject (i.e., English or math), either in the aggregate or any subgroup. After two consecutive years of not making AYP, the school is identified for Improvement Year 1. The school then must 1) notify parents or guardians of the school's accountability status; 2) revise the school improvement plan; and 3) receive technical assistance from the district (MADESE, 2007c).

Further, schools accepting Title I funds, which are schools with high percentages of children from low-income families, that have been identified for Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring are subject to greater sanctions than non-Title I schools. In addition to the abovementioned sanctions, a Title I school identified for Improvement Year 1 must also provide school choice for all students if available in the district and allocate 10% of the school's Title I funds to targeted professional development (MADESE, 2007c).

In the following year, if the school fails to make AYP again in the same subject, either in the aggregate or any subgroup, the school is identified for Improvement Year 2. Additional sanctions include revising the school's improvement plan based on new data and the analysis of findings, and in Title I schools offering Supplemental Education Services (SES) to low-income students (MADESE, 2007c).

After four consecutive years of not making AYP, the school is identified for Corrective Action. The district must take at least one Corrective Action step, which may include 1) instituting a new curriculum; 2) extending the length of the school year or school day; 3) replacing school staff; 4) decreasing local authority at the school; 5) restructuring the internal

organization of the school; or 6) appointing one or more outside experts to address the specific issues affecting the school's inability to make AYP. For Title I schools in Corrective Action, the district must continue to provide school choice and if available, SES supports (MADESE, 2007c).

Finally, after five consecutive years of not making AYP, the school is identified for Restructuring. An immediate change in the school's governance (i.e., the principal) and/or staffing occurs. If the school fails to make AYP the following year, even more severe consequences occur. Identified as a school in Restructuring Year 1, the school may 1) enter into a contract with a private agency to manage the school (as a public school); 2) be turned over to the State educational agency (SEA), if the State agrees, or 3) re-open as a pilot school or public charter school. For Title I schools in Restructuring, the district must continue to offer school choice and SES supports (MADESE, 2007c).

Massachusetts' accountability system is an example of this type of legislation. Although MERA predates NCLB, it is through the general statutes of MERA that the NCLB guidelines are implemented. Specifically, MERA called for the establishment of "state-wide educational goals for all public elementary and secondary schools in the commonwealth" (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1D, 1993), the implementation of curriculum frameworks, and mandated high stakes testing, which require that all students pass the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tenth-grade test in addition to meeting local requirements in order to receive a diploma upon graduation (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1J, 1993). Under MERA, students are tested in grades 4, 8, and 10, and the testing requirements of NCLB are reflected in the high stakes testing of MCAS (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1I, 1993).

Further, under MERA, if a school is labeled as underperforming, then the school is given six months to identify specific goals and twenty-four months to improve. If the school fails to demonstrate significant improvements within that time frame, the school is declared chronically underperforming. Therefore, principals working in Title I schools in Corrective Action must send notification to parents or guardians of the school's accountability status at the start of the school year; and revise the school's two year improvement plan to address the subjects, grade levels, and student groups in which the school did not make AYP. In developing this plan, the principal must consult with parents, school staff, and others. The plan must be completed no later than three months after the school has been identified for Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring. Principals must also institute a new curriculum that addresses the school's low performance and ensure that this curriculum is grounded on scientifically based research. They must provide teachers with appropriate professional development to implement the curriculum; offer school choice to students (that is, the opportunity to attend another school if available in the district); provide SES to students who are eligible for services (i.e., low-income students); possibly replace school staff; decrease the school's management authority; extend the school day or year; and/or restructure the internal organizational of the school (MADESE, 2007c). The principal may also be immediately removed if found to be a "significant role in the under-performance of the school" (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1J, 1993). Hence, under MERA and NCLB, all principals and especially those in underperforming schools must pay particular attention to MCAS scores and making AYP.

As a result of these profound changes in the education system, the role of the principal has become increasingly complex and demanding. Site-based management, shared decision-making, teacher empowerment, and greater public accountability are among some of the many changes

placed upon principals since *A Nation at Risk* (Brubaker, 1995; Mackler, 1996). Then, with the passage of both NCLB and MERA, which called for greater accountability for student achievement and school performances; more choices for parents and students; and statewide standards for students, educators, schools, and districts; the roles and responsibilities for administrators once again were redefined (USDOE, 2004). Principals today must be instructional leaders, business managers, consultants, advisors, astute politicians, and facilitators of change (Murray, 1995; VonVillas, 1994).

Faced with these demands of MERA and NCLB, the challenges of a *first year* principal are further compounded by having to cope with a new position, culture, and surroundings. It has been well documented that the role of a first year principal is extremely challenging (e.g., Alvy, 1983; Daresh, 1986a, 1986b, 1993; Duke, 1987; Duke, Isaacson, Sagor, & Schmuck, 1984; Greenfield, 1985a, 1985b; Hart, 1987; Parkay, Currie, & Rhodes, 1992; Parkay & Hall, 1992; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). A first year principal has to learn her new environment, while at the same time tend to the everyday tasks of running a school, which consists of being interrupted by issues that need to be immediately addressed, reports that must be filled, and people who need the principal's time and attention (Murray, 1995; Peterson & Kelley, 2001; VonVillas, 1994).

First year principals in schools in Corrective Action may face many unique challenges. They must attend to the immediate demands of an underperforming school, while still in the process of learning about the school and its culture. The researcher believes that there is an inherent tension between becoming familiar with and winning the trust of the major stakeholders in the community, while at the same time implementing necessary and wide reaching changes, which as a result may raise resistance.

In this age of standards and accountability mandated by MERA and NCLB, the role of the principal has changed (Houle, 2006). First year principals, especially those in schools in Corrective Action, are under public scrutiny. Their success depends on their ability to meet state and federal accountability standards (Johnson, Arumi, & Ott, 2006), while at the same time being receptive to the specific culture and expectations of their local constituency.

It is of critical importance to beginning principals that they listen, learn about the school culture, and gain the active cooperation of all stakeholders (i.e., central administration, administrators, teachers, parents, students, and other community members), without which no initiative can succeed (Barth, 1990; King & Blumer, 2000; Sergiovanni, 1984). As a first step, a beginning principal must build relationships with school members and “develop a process for learning, rather than reflexively focusing on tasks” (Jentz & Murphy, 2005b, p. 736). A central task for the new administrator is to observe and digest the descriptive culture by listening to and learning “about the values, behavioral norms, and cast of characters” (King & Blumer, 2000, p. 357) in the school. At the same time, the new principal must begin to lay the groundwork for shaping the prescriptive culture and for helping all people “visualize ways in which to be better” (King & Blumer, 2000, p. 357). How a principal conducts herself during her entry will set the stage “for how relationships will evolve and how effectively . . . [she] will be able to lead in the years to come” (King & Blumer, 2000, p. 360; Blumer, 1999; Jenz et al., 1982; Jentz & Murphy, 2005a, 2005b).

Section One: Statement of the Problem

With these thoughts in mind, the researcher has chosen to study what demands a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action faces. What does she need to know and be mindful of in order to be successful? What should her immediate priorities be? The purpose of this

dissertation is to offer a preliminary investigation into these questions and to develop a greater understanding of some of the challenges and demands that a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action may face. It is the researcher's hope that findings from this study will offer first year principals in similar circumstances with pertinent and useful information so that they can begin to develop a roadmap for a successful entry. As the researcher is also a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action, she, in essence, will be using her experiences as a frame of reference to explore the aforementioned questions. Hence, the goal of this study is not to offer a critique of the researcher's entry but to learn more about the expectations of creating a successful entry for a beginning principal.

Section Two: Research Question

While the perceptions of her students, parents, administrators, and community members are just as vital and necessary in learning how to create a successful entry, the scope of this study focuses on the teacher's perspective, as only a point of reference. Thus, the research question driving this study is:

What factors do middle school teachers perceive as vital for creating a successful entry for a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action?

Section Three: Theoretical Rationale

A critical understanding of the following literature is crucial and pertinent to this study: 1) the theoretical framework of administrator entry and its phases; 2) studies and lessons on effective administrator entry; 3) empirical studies of first year principals; and 4) the role of the principal in implementing change.

Part One of Section Three: Theoretical Framework of Administrator Entry and Its Phases

Beyond the demands and pressures that any principal under Corrective Action faces, studies indicate that beginning principals are confronted with unique challenges (Brubaker, 1995; Franklin, 2005; Lashway, 2003; Mackler, 1996; Murray, 1995; Tooms, 2003; VonVillas, 1994). A useful approach to understanding leadership development is derived from Merton's (1968) socialization theory, which is defined as the processes or the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are required of an individual to perform a social role effectively. Professional socialization refers to the "processes through which one becomes a member of a profession and, over time, develops an identity with that profession" (Parkay et al., 1992, p. 45). Organizational socialization, on the other hand, refers to "the process by which one is taught and learns 'the ropes' of a particular organizational role" (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 211) within a specific work environment.

Studies on first year principals from Duke (1987), Hart (1987), Van Maanen (1978), and Wentworth (1980) indicate that professional and organizational socialization occur simultaneously for first year principals unlike experienced principals starting a new job. The development of beginning principals is more involved and incremental – starting in teaching, moving through preservice training and internships, and then extending through their first year on the job. In essence, the principal's identity as a leader of the school is shaped not only by the skills and knowledge that she brings to the job (professional socialization) but also by the socialization and learning that occurs on the job (organizational socialization). Van Maanen and Schein (1979) also noted that for beginning principals to be successful, they should be aware of what happens when they enter an established organization as a new member. First year principals

must learn the social role that will buy them access to legitimacy and validation in a given setting (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Other studies found that beginning principals go through different stages in their careers (Hart, 1988, 1993; Parkay et al., 1992; Parkay & Hall, 1992).

Parkay et al. (1992) and Parkay and Hall (1992) identified five stages to describe the career patterns of new principals: *survival*, *control*, *stability*, *educational leadership*, and *professional actualization*. They believed that principals began at different stages of development and the pace, through which novice principals progress, plays a key role in their levels of effectiveness and success.

Hart (1993) developed a similar model and identified three major periods of organizational socialization in the principal's entry period, beginning with *encounter*, *anticipation*, or *confrontation*; moving to *adjustment*, *accommodation*, and *clarity*; and ending with *stabilization*.

Part Two of Section Three: Studies and Lessons on Effective Principal Entry

Jentz et al. (2006) suggests using a systematic step-by-step model to address the stages of a beginning principal's entry. Their approach includes 1) designing an entry plan; 2) testing the draft with members of the school community (central administration, administrators, teachers, parents, students, and other community members) and revising the draft with them; 3) distributing the plan; 4) "declar[ing] a moratorium on change" (p. 25); and 5) getting acquainted with members of the school community. According to Jentz et al., this approach enables the new principal to interact with central administration, teachers, parents, students, and other community member in a reflective, collaborative manner. By working with school members toward a common goal, the new principal establishes herself as the leader (professional socialization) and

learns the necessary knowledge, values, and behaviors required to be successful in her new role (organizational socialization).

King and Blumer (2000) as well as Jentz and Murphy (2005a, 2005b) further provide new principals with invaluable lessons for understanding their school culture and for entering their new positions. According to these scholars, new principals should embrace their confusion, and use it as a lens for entry as well as an opportunity to learn more about the school and its culture, oneself, and the school district. Because “communities are seeking educational leaders who see their work as building strong school cultures” (King & Blumer, 2000, p. 356), the first year principal should take the time to learn about the school’s values and behavioral norms, as well as establish authentic relationships with school members (Sergiovanni, 2005; Starratt, 2004). At the same time, the new principal should lay the foundation for shaping the prescriptive culture and begin to help people visualize ways of becoming better. New principals should also actively listen, not just fix things that are broken, and learn to define problems in the context of the school (King & Blumer, 2000). By listening to and asking teachers and other staff members for feedback, new principals show their staff that they care and respect them. Finally, King and Blumer (2000) remind new principals that “what they do and how they conduct themselves during . . . [their entry period] . . . or ‘honeymoon’ phase sets the stage for how their relationships will evolve and how effectively they will be able to lead in the years to come” (p. 360).

Part Three of Section Three: Empirical Studies of First Year Principals

New principals often feel lonely, isolated, unprepared, and pressed for time. Alvy (1983) found that new administrators needed to adjust to alienation from staff, develop a greater tolerance to diverse opinions, and have a wider perspective of important issues. Weindling and

Earley's (1987) ten-year longitudinal study of head teachers in England and Wales established a greater understanding on the work life, demands, and needs of beginning head teachers. This seminal study laid the foundation for a series of studies on beginning principals in the United States. Modeled after Weindling and Earley's (1987) research, Parkay et al. (1992) and Parkay and Hall (1992) conducted the most comprehensive study on beginning principals in secondary schools in the United States. Similar to Weindling and Earley's (1992) findings, many first year principals felt extremely isolated in their principalships because of the lack of institutionalized processes for socializing them into their new roles (Hart, 1988, 1993; Parkay et al., 1992; Parkay & Hall, 1992; Van Maanen, 1977; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Part Four of Section Three: Role of the Principal in Implementing Change

Studies also indicate that for a first year principal to be successful, she must have a deep understanding of the school's culture because the organization's values and norms may be different from those she has learned in professional socialization (Hart, 1994). It is important for the first year principal to recognize that although as principal, she has formal leadership power, she "depends on those in the school for the power of the group to act" (Hart, 1994, p. 5). Real authority comes from "establishing credibility with subordinates, peers, and superiors" (Hill, 2007, p. 52). The most effective change in school culture occurs when the principal, teachers, and students model the beliefs and behaviors important to the school (Deal & Peterson, 1990).

To do so, the principal must create opportunities for open, honest communication so that all stakeholders can begin to examine existing practices critically, question their long-term assumptions about learning, and move toward constructing jointly "new meanings and practices that shape and realize their goals" (Oakes, Quartz, Ryan, & Lipton 2000, p. 23). Developing a shared vision takes a "*long* time . . . and involves a lot of reflection and a great deal of listening

and mutual understanding” (Senge, 1990, p. 289). Therefore, it is important for a first year principal to recognize that turning around a school is a long term process and involves all stakeholders (i.e., teachers, parents, students, administrators, and other community members) (Fullan, 1999). While the demands of NCLB and MERA place pressure for principals to make quick fixes, Fullan (1992) reminds us that principals should concentrate on “building collaborative cultures rather than charging forcefully in with heavy agendas for change” (p. 19). For change to be successful and pervasive, all stakeholders must be involved and part of this hard work (Senge, 1995). Invariably, one such power base is the teacher body. For this reason, the researcher has chosen to study from the teachers’ perspectives what factors do they perceive as essential for creating a successful entry for a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action.

Section Four: Research Design

In this study, a qualitative single-case study approach was used. Merriam (1998) notes that qualitative research is common in educational research and is used as a basis to “understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives . . . of the people involved (p. 11). Qualitative research is often selected when there is a limited theory base or when the theory fails to explain fully a specific phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). It involves understanding the complexity of people’s lives by delving deeply into individual perspectives in context (Hepper, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999). Because the nature of this study was descriptive and examined the teachers’ perspectives in a particular situation, qualitative research methodology was chosen as the best means to gather teacher perceptions and their expectations of a first year principal.

This qualitative single-case study further illuminated in greater depth the work life and demands of a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action, specifically focusing on the

teachers' perspectives of what constitutes as a successful entry. Case study research is an in-depth study of a single phenomenon, whether it is an individual, a classroom, an organization, or an ongoing process (Frankel & Wallen, 2006). The researcher purposely selected Hope Middle School (HMS) because it was a school in Corrective Action. From 2003-2006, the school did not make AYP in the subgroup of special education in math. 18% of the students were on free or reduced lunch, which qualified this school to receive Title I funds. As this was her first principalship, the researcher was considered an outsider by her teachers. In accepting this job, she relocated from a well-to-do suburb of Boston. She was unfamiliar with the town, the school, and its culture. The accessibility to the inner workings of this school allowed her to describe her interactions with teachers in greater detail. Moreover, her personal commitment to the success of this school made this study of great significance and interest to her.

The population of this study consisted of 78 teachers, who had a range of 1 to 30 years of teaching experience.

Purposeful sampling was used to ensure a greater diversity of perspectives as represented in the population. Patton (1990) argues that the "logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance, thus the term purposeful sampling" (p. 169). While Merriam does not offer a specific number, Patton (1990) recommends specifying a minimum sample size "based on expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study" (p. 186). In this research, the population of interest was the sample. Hence, all 78 teachers with various years of teaching experience, from different grade levels and departments, and of different genders and ages were invited to participate in an anonymous on-line survey voluntarily.

The number of participants in a qualitative study is based upon sufficiency and saturation of information (Merriam, 1998). While Merriam does not offer a specific number, Patton (1990) recommends specifying a minimum sample size “based on expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study” (p. 186). Thus, having all possible participants (i.e., 78 teachers) who varied in their years of teaching experience; who taught in different grade levels and departments; and who varied in gender and age, helped to satisfy the criterion of reasonable coverage to ensure that a point of saturation or redundancy had been reached (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998).

Data were obtained through three sources: 1) an on-line survey; 2) the researcher’s reflective journals and field notes; and 3) documents, such as agendas, articles, and reports about the school. Teacher responses from the on-line survey, the researcher’s journal entries, and school documents were analyzed using constant comparative method and grounded theory. In keeping with grounded theory, analysis was ongoing and involved both an inductive and deductive process (Patton, 2002). Specific steps were used as outlined by Harry, Sturges, and Klinger (2005) for open coding and axial coding, as well as Miles and Huberman (1994) for developing categories. Themes were developed by “determining which categories . . . [are] dominant in the data” (Harry et al., 2005, p. 6), and interpretations and generalizations will be based on themes. To improve the validity of the study, the researcher piloted her survey questions with teachers not involved in this study. This helped to ensure that the interview questions were aligned with the research question. Further, participants were invited to review, critique, and comment on the analysis and interpretation of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Finally, findings from multiple sources of data provided triangulation and improved the quality of data collected and the accuracy of the interpretations (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

Section Five: Limitations of the Study

While the researcher's personal commitment to this school makes this study of great value to her, her involvement also posed some caveats of which she was mindful. Data collector bias posed as a limitation, as the researcher was directly involved in this study. This bias could have influenced the objectivity of data-gathering and analysis. However, to reduce this bias and ensure this study's validity, the researcher kept thorough records, followed methods meticulously, and most importantly acknowledged her subjectivity (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

Possible loss of subjects was another limitation. It could have limited generalizability and introduced bias. While all 78 teachers were asked to participate in the anonymous on-line survey voluntarily, not all teachers participated. Those participants who did not participate may have responded differently than those of which data were collected (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 170). Therefore, it was important to document both the total size of the sample, along with the overall percentage of returns from the survey as well as the percentage of total responses for each item. Because results from the survey were based on the number of teachers participating in the survey, the researcher did her best to encourage participation from all teachers. Before this survey was administered, the researcher provided teachers with a full explanation about the study and informed teachers that participation was voluntary. She further informed teachers that their identities and responses would remain anonymous. Because the survey was on-line, teachers were able to take this survey at a time most convenient for them. This guaranteed anonymity and the survey's accessibility may have helped to increase both the number of participants taking the survey and to ensure a greater response rate for each item.

The ability to generalize findings from a single case study was another limitation. This study looked narrowly at how teachers perceive a first year principal as creating a successful entry in a

middle school in Corrective Action. Nonetheless, the lessons learned from this study can yield valuable, rich information that first year principals might find pertinent and useful to their own schools. According to Maxwell (1992), “the value of a qualitative study may depend on its lack of external generalizability in a statistical sense; it may provide an account of a setting or population that is illuminating” (p. 294).

Section Six: Definition of Terms

In this study, the terms staff and staff members defined the overall personnel at HMS, including the vice principals, the teaching assistants, the custodians, the nurses, the department heads, the guidance counselors, the school psychologist, the school police officer, the librarian, the grant writer, the secretaries, and the teachers.

Further, beginning teacher was denoted by 0 to 5 years of teaching experience; intermediate teacher by 6 to 9 years of teaching experience; junior teacher by 10 to 15 years of teaching experience; and veteran teacher by more than 15 years of teaching experience. Teaching experience includes the total number of years that a teacher has taught not only in the Hope Public School District (HPSD) but also in another school or district.

On-team teachers at HMS were the English teacher, the math teacher, the science teacher, the social studies teacher, and the special education teacher; whereas, off-team teachers denoted the Applied math teacher, the art teacher, the band teacher, the Conversational French teacher, the French teacher, the general music teacher, the Gifted and Talented teacher, the health teacher, the physical education teacher, the Spanish teacher, the strings teacher, the Technology Education teacher, and the Title I reading teacher, as well as the other specialists in the school, who included the reading and language specialists.

Section Seven: Significance of the Study

In this age of standards and accountability, it is clear that the role of the principal has changed (Houle, 2006). The ability of principals to adapt to the new norms and expectations is of critical importance. While there has been increasing knowledge about the work life and demands of first year principals (e.g., Alvy, 1983; Daresh, 1986a, 1986b, 1993; Duke, 1987; Duke et al., 1984; Greenfield, 1985a, 1985b; Hart 1987; Parkay et al., 1992; Parkay & Hall, 1992; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), the abovementioned works to the best of the researcher's knowledge do not focus on the unique needs and conditions that beginning principals face in *schools in Corrective Action*. In particular, all of the studies on beginning principals occurred before the No Child Left Behind Act was implemented in 2001. Findings from this case study will provide new principals with vital information as to what teachers perceive as most important for a successful entry, and in essence, a road map of where and how to begin. The novice principal will have the keys to entry that can lead to success in the principalship. This case study will help to create a greater awareness and provide information on the types of supports and activities that a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action may need in order to have a successful entry. This information is especially useful to beginning principals, who are now faced with the pressures of ensuring that all students in their schools reach proficiency in English and math by the year 2014 (MADESE, 2007a).

Section Eight: Overview of the Chapters

The following contains a breakdown of this dissertation. In chapter one, a brief historical and contextual background of the problem is provided, and the research question is defined. A short explanation is further offered on how the problem will be researched. Chapter two presents a literature review on topics that are essential to the research question. The review includes the

following: 1) a detailed examination of the No Child Left Behind Act and how Massachusetts implements this federal statute; 2) how the requirements of these reforms impact the role of the principal; and 3) the theoretical framework of administrator entry as well as findings from empirical studies of beginning principals. Chapter three then describes the research design and provides an explicit rationale for using the qualitative single-case study approach. The strategies used for data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting are illustrated. Further, two pilot studies that were used to test and refine the research methodology. In chapter four, the study's findings are presented by analyzing the data collected and addressing the research question. In chapter five, the findings are discussed in relation to the research on successful administrator entry presented in chapter two, and suggestions for future research are offered.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Foreward

Chapter two provides an introduction and four sections that are essential in building a solid foundation for the research question.

The introduction frames the research topic by establishing the overall tone for chapter two. It provides a succinct overview of competing public policies that have impacted educational reforms in the past and present.

Section one then elaborates on this theme in greater detail by providing readers with an historical synopsis of key educational policies and laws that have impacted the Massachusetts public school systems. This section further expounds on how these specific policies and laws have changed the roles and expectations of principals today. Section one contains four parts.

Part one of section one presents an overview of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 leading up to *A Nation at Risk* in 1983.

Part two of section one describes presents a timeline of important events from *A Nation at Risk* to the authorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. Part two contains two subsections: the first of which describes how *A Nation at Risk* impacted the establishment of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA) of 1993, and the second presents how *A Nation at Risk* affected other state and federal reforms including NCLB.

Part three of section one then provides an overall summary of the accountability measures in NCLB and describes its impact on the Massachusetts public school systems. Part three consists of two subsections. Subsection A begins by describing the accountability measures of NCLB. Subsection B illustrates how the accountability structures of NCLB have impacted MERA and its effects on the Massachusetts public school systems today.

Part four of section concludes with how the guidelines of NCLB have changes the roles and responsibilities of Massachusetts principals today.

Section two then explores the challenges and issues that Massachusetts principals face in underperforming schools and what strategies and leadership qualities are essential for successfully transforming these schools. This section has three parts. Part one of section two illustrates the specific challenges and increased job responsibilities of Massachusetts principals in schools in Corrective Action. Part two of section two describes studies on the principals' strategies for turning around their schools in Corrective Action, and gives an account of successful examples of schools that have undergone remarkable improvement. Specifically, it highlights the strategies of these successful principals that proved effective in turning around their schools. Part three of section two illustrates the leadership qualities of these principals and makes reference to other research on effective principals.

Section three connects the previous sections to the final one in chapter two, and provides readers with a detailed discussion of the research topic and the purpose of this dissertation.

Section four is comprised of an introduction and three parts. Part one begins with an overview of the theoretical framework of administrator entry. Part two then explores its various stages. Part three elaborates on the studies and lessons on effective administrator entry, and concludes by providing readers with a clear understanding of the significance of this study and its research question.

The conclusion then offers readers an overall summary of key themes explored in this chapter and touches briefly on the pivotal research that has helped to shape and nuance the present study.

Introduction to Chapter Two

In the last decades, the face of the education system in America has changed dramatically through a sequence of far reaching reforms (Finn, Kanstoroom, & Petrilli, 1999). These reforms have been driven by two competing forces. Initially, and as a response to the Civil Rights movement and the War on Poverty in the sixties, it was recognized that measures must be taken to ensure equity in educational opportunities to all segments of society. The creation of programs, such as Title I, Head Start, and bilingual education in the 1960s and special education for children with disabilities in the 1970s helped to ensure a greater equity to all. For the next twenty years, this mindset would dominate U.S. federal education policy (Ravitch, 1999). However, with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 came a second wave of reforms. It became evident to businesspeople, policymakers, community leaders, and to the public at large that the level of education of our nation was lagging behind other developed nations (Ravitch, 1999). The United States was in danger of losing its competitive edge in the global economy. Thus, the challenge emerged of raising the bar of excellence (to ensure that all students would be ready to compete in the world market), while at the same time striving to close the achievement gap (to guarantee a greater equity to all).

Yet, balancing between these two competing interests proved to be extremely difficult and an ongoing and challenging process (Goldberg, 2003). Its effects are clearly present. They have created a major shift in thinking about the primary purpose for public education and the role of the federal government in education. They have challenged the expectations of school board members and district superintendents, and even changed the role and responsibilities of principals.

Section One: The Historical Context

To understand the complexity of the principal's job today, this section begins with an historical overview of the NCLB.

Part One of Section One: A Historical Perspective from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to A Nation at Risk in 1983

On April 11, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (Finch & Allen, 1969), which would foreshadow the federal government's increasing role in K-12 education, and eventually lead to the most comprehensive reform in the history of the nation, the No Child Left Behind Act.

Since its inception, the goal of ESEA was to redress the needs of America's most disadvantaged children by ensuring educational opportunity and equality to all (Finch & Allen, 1969; Ravitch, 1999). Originally, entitled Title I: Better Schooling for Educationally Deprived Children, the ambitious piece of legislation drove to:

provide financial assistance . . . to local educational agencies serving . . . children from low-income families; and to expand and improve their educational programs by various means . . . which contribute particularly to meeting the special education needs of educationally deprived children. (20 USCS ch. 70, § 201)

With an annual appropriation of more than \$8 billion, Title I at present reaches more than 90% of school districts across the nation and effects more than 12.5 million students in both public and private schools (Flake, 1999; USDOE, 2007b). Over the past thirty-five years, more than \$100 billion dollars has been allocated to local school districts with the mandate to close the achievement gap between at-risk students and their more advantaged peers (Flake, 1999; USDOE, 2007b).

However, research on the educational effectiveness of Title I programs remains inconclusive (Borman & D'Agnostino, 1996; Pelavin & David, 1977; Puma & Drury, 2000). While some researchers report that Title I has failed in its intended promise of closing the achievement gap between at-risk students and their more privileged peers (e.g., Kuntz & Lyczak; Mullin & Summers, 1983), others analysts perceive Title I as an invaluable resource in raising the overall achievement of underprivileged children (e.g., Plunkett, 1985; Stickney & Plunkett, 1983).

These inconclusive findings along with the billions of dollars spent on Title I led the federal government to take greater accountability measures than the occasional audit (Palmaffy, 1999). With each reauthorization of Title I (e.g., 1968, 1970, 1974, and 1978) came new guidelines and regulations to ensure that Title I funds were used effectively, and for their intended population (Palmaffy, 1999; Puma & Drury, 2000). The best-known Title I stipulation, “supplement, not supplant” required that federal monies “not be used to pay for services otherwise given to kids or required by states” (Palmaffy, 1999, p. 22). Other regulations included, allocating funds to parenting programs, granting funds to high poverty schools before low poverty ones, conducting a needs assessments to identify educationally disadvantaged children, and designing programs to address their needs. The post-1975 studies showed that these measures helped to ensure that federal funds were reaching their intended recipients and spent on the envisioned goals (Palmaffy, 1999).

Part Two of Section One: A Nation at Risk to No Child Left Behind

In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* was published, and decreed “a rising tide of mediocrity . . . threaten[ing] our very future as a Nation and a people” (USDOE, 1983, p. 1). This declaration struck a chord with many educators, politicians, and businesspeople, serving as a catalyst for a wave of reform efforts at the local, state, and federal levels. Increasing pressures were placed on

schools to improve student achievement, in particular, to boost test scores in both math and science, the subjects perceived as most crucial for American's economic survival (Peterson, 2003). *A Nation at Risk* not only captured the attention of the public but also transformed how the public would view schooling for the next quarter century (Ravitch, 2003). No longer would the focus be solely on ensuring equity for all students but also pursuing academic excellence for all. This shift in philosophy led to the standards and accountability movement and impact educational policy at both the federal and state levels (Chubb et al., 2003). Academic excellence would become the undergirding policy driving future educational reforms, and how Title I would be transformed (Puma & Drury, 2000).

Prior to *A Nation at Risk*, public education (for the most part) was the chief responsibility of each individual state (Pipho, 1996). Therefore, to address the issues brought forth in this alarming report, some individual states began to take drastic measures early on (Medler, 1994). In the late 1980s, Kentucky became the first state to define its own approach to education reform (Driscoll, 2004). Others states, such as Alabama, Arizona, California, Massachusetts, North Carolina, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Texas soon followed and created their own comprehensive statutory system for measuring student achievement, teacher quality, and school and district accountability (Medler, 1994; Walberg, 2003).

Subsection A: A Nation at Risk and Its Impact on Massachusetts Education Reform Act

In Massachusetts, Paul Reville, the former Executive Director of the Alliance for Education in Worcester, and the late businessman Jack Rennie met with other businesspeople from across the Commonwealth to establish the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE) in 1988 (Rennie et al., 1991). They were gravely concerned that the next generation of students would lack the knowledge and skills to compete successfully in the global economy. Therefore, with the

political support of then-state Representative Mark Roosevelt and former state Senator Thomas Birmingham, MBE set out to develop a comprehensive reform to address the shortcomings of the Massachusetts' elementary and secondary public education system. Hence, Rennie et al. created a school proposal, entitled *Every Child a Winner!* based on these three guiding principles:

1. Setting the course toward a higher plane of student achievement by creating a vision of a system tied to international norms, and by setting expectations at world-class levels. State goals and standards would be revamped with greater emphasis on outcomes and accountability.
2. Improving the operational characteristics of the system itself through a series of reforms improving the quality of the teacher work force and school system management, and by increasing focus on student preparation, knowledge, and measurable achievement.
3. Changing the educational finance system to guarantee overall funding, sufficient to provide for a quality education for all students, equity across all school districts, and improved year-to-year stability . . . and to give special attention to economically disadvantaged youth. (p. ES-3)

Every Child a Winner! became the driving force and the conceptual framework for the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 (Driscoll, 2004).

While businesspeople and politicians believed that schools should be provided with the means (i.e., money) and the flexibility to address the educational needs of students, there was also a firm belief that schools, with greater choices and more freedoms, should be held more accountable for results (Hill, 1999; Ravitch, 1999). This principle would be mirrored in the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA) of 1993.

On June 19, 1993, MERA was enacted and called for a transformation in the public education system over a period of seven years. Under MERA, some of the major changes were 1) establishing a foundation budget; 2) setting guidelines for operating charter schools; 3) increasing student time on learning; and 4) raising expectations and qualifications of all educators. Other changes included 5) developing state frameworks and guidelines for local curriculum; 6) mandating statewide student testing; 7) implementing high-stakes testing; 8) adopting graduation standards; 9) addressing underperforming schools; 10) establishing school councils, and 11) providing school officials (i.e., the superintendent and the principal) greater discretionary authority (MADESE, 1997b). The later are pertinent to this dissertation topic and are discussed in greater detail below.

State Frameworks and Guides for Local Curriculum

Prior to the Act, there were no statewide, mandated curriculum requirements except for history and physical education (MADESE, 1997a). With the “establishment of statewide educational goals for all public elementary and secondary schools” (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1D, 1993), a common core of academic subjects (i.e., mathematics, science and technology, history and social science, English, foreign language, and the arts) would be taught in all schools kindergarten through twelve. Therefore, to set high expectations for the performance of all students and to reflect the *common core curriculum* goals, MERA directed the Board to delegate the development of curriculum frameworks to the Commissioner of Education who, with a variety of experts including school community members (i.e., classroom teachers, parents, and college professors), would design the content of these frameworks (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1E, 1993). They would serve as the guidelines for teachers in their daily lesson plans and for districts in planning their curriculum (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1E, 1993).

Statewide Assessment Program, High-Stakes Testing, and Graduation Requirements

Other measures that also increased accountability at the site level included the development of the statewide assessment program, high-stakes testing, and graduation requirements (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1D, 1E, 1I, 1993). In May 1998, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), which is the Commonwealth's statewide assessment program, was implemented. MCAS served two purposes: 1) to provide schools with useful feedback for improving classroom instruction; and 2) to “measure the performance of individual students and schools against established state standards” (MADESE, 1998, p. 1). MCAS became a tool to monitor student progress and to hold schools more accountable for the academic achievement of all students (MADESE, 1998).

MERA further required that MCAS be administered to students in grades 4, 8, and 10 in all public schools (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1I, 1993). Hence, MCAS became a high-stakes test: all tenth grade students had to pass MCAS and meet local requirements to receive a high school diploma (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1D, 1I, 1993). Upon graduation, students would either earn a “certificate of mastery” or a “certificate of occupational proficiency.” A “certificate of master” signified that the student had “demonstrated mastery of a comprehensive body of skills, competencies and knowledge” (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1D, 1993); whereas, a “certificate of occupational proficiency” demonstrated that the student had “successfully complete[d] a comprehensive education and training program in a particular trade or professional skill area” (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1D, 1993).

Underperforming Schools

While MERA foreshadowed the movement toward a standards-based reform through the adoption of statewide goals, curriculum frameworks, and assessments, another significant change

was the increased accountability for school and district performance. In the case of underperforming schools, the State, itself, was granted additional powers to ensure that its goal of ensuring that all student achieve at high academic levels would be fulfilled. If a school failed to improve the academic performance of its students, it would be declared as *underperforming*, whereupon a fact-finding team would convene to “assess the reason for the under-performance and the prospects for improvement . . . no later than ninety days from the date of its appointment” (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1J, 1993). The school would then be given six months to identify specific goals and twenty-four months to carry out the plan. If the school failed to demonstrate significant improvements within that time frame, the school would be declared as *chronically underperforming*, and the following sanctions would be put into place: 1) the principal may be removed if deemed to be part of the problem; 2) the superintendent may appoint a new principal with extraordinary powers, including the power to dismiss staff; 3) the Commissioner may direct funds to increase staff salaries; 4) additional funding may be increased to the per pupil expenditure; and 5) the Board of Education may “increase the number of students attending the school who satisfy the student performance standards” (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1J, 1993).

The School Council

Another paramount change associated with the Education Reform Act was the movement toward site-based management. Under MERA, a vast number of educational issues affecting students was made through the establishment of the school council, which comprised of the principal, teachers, parents, community members, and at least one student (applicable only for high schools). The school council would represent the racial and ethnic make-up of the school and its community to ensure that decisions made on all students are reflective of the entire

student body (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 71, § 37H, 59C, 1993). Established in every public school, the school council would be responsible for 1) identifying the educational needs of all students; 2) reviewing the annual school budget; 3) developing the school improvement plan, which included the creation, adoption, and implementation of the school's educational goals; and 4) evaluating the student handbook, in particular, the rules pertaining to student conduct (applicable only for high schools) (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 71, § 37H, 59C, 1993). The school improvement plan would further be submitted and approved by the school committed annually (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 71, § 37H, 59C, 1993).

The Superintendent and the Principal with Greater Discretionary Authority

In addition, MERA afforded both superintendents and principals with several discretionary responsibilities that were formerly under the school committee's purview. Under MERA, the superintendent no longer needed the approval of the school committee to recommend an individual to be hired or fired. While the school committee still retained the authority to appoint and dismiss a superintendent, the superintendent under MERA now had the authority to hire and fire a principal (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 71, § 59, 59B 1993). Further, under MERA, the principal could hire and fire a teacher with the superintendent's agreement (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 71, § 37H, 42, 1993). The only exception would be a teacher assigned to more than one school. In that case, the superintendent, and not the principal, would make all decisions relating to that teacher's dismissal or demotion for cause (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 71, § 42, 1993).

Principals also exercised greater discretionary authority in the expulsion of students. Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 71, § 37H (1993) stipulates that the principal may expel a student who commits the following activities on school grounds or at school-sponsored events: 1) possessing of a dangerous weapon; 2) possessing of a controlled substance; or 3) assaulting any member of the

school's educational staff. During the expulsion hearing, the principal, however, may choose to suspend the student rather than to expel him. Whether the student is suspended or expelled, the principal must follow a procedural due process and notify the student and superintendent of her decision in writing. An expelled student has ten days from the date of expulsion to appeal the principal's decision in writing to the superintendent. The superintendent has the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 71, § 37H^{1/2}, 1993).

Finally, as more decisions were made at the building level by principals, it was clear that the State demanded greater accountability from schools. Hence, MERA became the vehicle for businesspeople, policymakers, and the public to measure and monitor student progress, and the means to establish and enforce their expectation of a high quality education for all.

Subsection B: A Nation at Risk and Its Effects on State and Federal Reforms as well as the No Child Left Behind Act

Parallel to these developments in Massachusetts, a number of others states (i.e., Alabama, Arizona, California, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, and South Dakota) were also moving toward standards-based reforms and increased accountability (Walberg, 2003). States, such as Connecticut, Maine, Vermont, and Virginia outlined their state-level objectives in documents called "Common Cores of Learning" (Medler, 1994). Oregon and Minnesota adopted a certificate of mastery similar to Massachusetts', which replaced their traditional high school diplomas (Medler, 1994). As many states began to adopt significant changes in their education codes and to move toward a standards-based system, these developments began to impact federal policies (Walberg, 2003). In 1989, President George H. W. Bush held the First National Education Summit. He invited state governors, members of U.S. Congress, and White House staff to develop content standards at the national level (Standerdfer, 2006).

As a result of this summit, six National Education Goals were adopted, and the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) was charged with the task of tracking progress toward these six national goals (Miller, 2000). In 1991, President Bush introduced America 2000 as a legislative package that included the National Educational Goals. However, details of the bill drew some criticism from both union and conservative members, and the bill was defeated. “The unions were opposed to provisions for school choice” (USDOE, 1995, p. 33), while the conservatives feared that the increasing role of the federal government would infringe on their control on local educational affairs. Both sides were deeply concerned about a national testing program (USDOE, 1995). In spite of its defeat, the movement toward performance standards, standardized testing, and accountability systems continued to pervade the nation (Adams, n.d.). By the end of 1992, 48 states and more than 2000 communities would pledge their commitment to achieving the National Goals, and become a part of America 2000 (Miller, 2000).

The standards-based movement in education would continue into the Clinton administration (Adams, n.d.). In 1994, Clinton proposed Goals 2000: Educate America Act, which in many ways was similar to Bush’s America 2000. The major difference was that Goals 2000 did not require that state standards to be aligned to any national standards. It did, however, stipulate that for states to receive Goal 2000 grants, states and local agencies would be required to set explicit standards for curriculum content and for increasing student achievement (Miller, 2000). In March 31, 1994, Goals 2000 was passed, and the Act codified in law the six original education goals. Two new goals were later added. As such, the National Goals (20 USCS 5812 § 102) decreed the following:

1. By the year 2000, all children in America [would] start school ready to learn.
2. By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate [would] increase to 80 percent.

3. By the year 2000, all students [would] leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter.
4. By the year 2000, the Nation's teaching force [would] have access to programs for . . . continued improvement . . . and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century.
5. By the year 2000, United States students [were to] be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.
6. By the year 2000, every adult American [would] be literate and possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
7. By the year 2000, every school in the United States [would] be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized firearms and alcohol and [would] offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.
8. By the year 2000, every school [would] promote partnerships that [would] increase parent involvement.

Regretfully, federal funding on programs, such as Chapter 1 (originally known as Title I) continued to increase without any noticeable gains in student achievement (Keegan, 2003). In fact, the 1993 National Assessment concluded in their program evaluation of Chapter 1: 1) many high-poverty high schools and middle schools did not receive Chapter 1 funds (because they were reallocated to elementary schools in their districts); 2) districts had not informed principals of the different programmatic options in Chapter 1; 3) students in high-poverty schools received non-challenging curricula when compared to students attending suburban schools; and 4)

Chapter 1 instruction was minimal, and consisted on average an additional thirty minutes of extra instructional time per week (USDOE, 1993).

Confronted with the dismal performance of Chapter 1 and rising demands for higher academic achievement in Goals 2000, the Clinton administration and the 103rd Congress significantly restructured this program (Vinovskis, 1999). Reintroduced again as Title I of Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994, this new legislation called for "standards-based education," requiring states to develop "challenging content standards and challenging student performance standards" (20 USCS 8001 § 1111(b)(1)(A)), that were linked to authentic assessments and aligned to school curriculum and instructional practices (20 USCS 8001 § 1111(b)(3)).

Under IASA, states were given a one-year time frame to develop high-level academic content standards in math, reading or language arts. They were given four years to develop statewide comprehensive testing systems (20 USCS 8001 § 1111(b)(6)). States determined the criteria for "adequately yearly progress" (20 USCS 8001 § 1111(b)(2)), based on their "high-quality, yearly student assessments" (20 USCS 8001 § 1111(b)(3)) in English and math.

States also had to establish an internal accountability system that would monitor the progress of students achievement and identify struggling schools, districts, and underachieving Title I schools (20 USCS 8001 § 1117(c)). These schools would be required to formulate a school improvement plan, which would address how they would meet the State's student performance standards (20 USCS 8001 § 1117(c)(2)(C)). Thus, individual states determined how to measure adequate yearly progress was measured and how Corrective Action was administered to their underperforming schools.

To achieve academic excellence for all, the federal government tried to create a more comprehensive program by “align[ing] federal resources and policies with existing state and local school reforms” (Puma & Drury, 2000, p. 13). However, by 1998, only thirty-eight states had adopted some form of state standards (Walberg, 2003). According to a 1999 report by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, only eight states (i.e., Alabama, Arizona, California, Massachusetts, North Carolina, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Texas) and the District of Columbia had strong standards across subject areas of English, history, geography, math, and science (Finn & Petrilli, 2000). Only five states (i.e., Alabama, California, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas) had both solid academic standards and strong accountability (Finn & Petrilli, 2000).

Part Three of Section One: The No Child Left Behind Act and Its Impact on the Massachusetts Public Schools

The evidence was clear. Billions of dollars had been spent on Title I with an insubstantial return. When it came to taking action, few states were ready to take the necessary steps (Finn & Petrilli, 2000). Many had weak accountability systems, and had failed to impose sanctions on schools that continued to underachieve (Finn & Petrilli, 2000). If anything, imposing true accountability measures and standards-based reforms would require more than a gentle prod. To close the achievement gap once and for all, something would need to change for our nation’s underprivileged students. As President Bush expressed, “Clearly our children are our future, and too many of our neediest children are being left behind” (USODE, 2005, p. 1). Faced with this grave state of affairs, Congress and the President realized that the federal government must take matters into its own hands in order to affect genuine change (Keegan, 2003). Consequently, on January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush reauthorized Title I of the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (MADESE, 2007a).

NCLB represents the most comprehensive reform and substantive change to education policy in more than 40 years in the history of the country (Standerfer, 2006). Affecting every state and public school district, NCLB impacts all 100,000 public schools in the nation (Rentner et al., 2006). This includes more than 50,000 public schools across the country that use Title I funds for additional instruction in reading and math as well as “special preschool, after-school, and summer programs to extend and reinforce the regular school curriculum” (USDOE, 2007b, p. 1).

Subsection A: Accountability Measures of No Child Left Behind

Under NCLB, goals include, (1) “ensuring that high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum, and instructional materials are aligned . . . [to] . . . State academic standards” (20 USCS 6301 § 1001(1)); (2) “meeting the education needs of low-achieving children in . . . [the] Nation’s highest-poverty schools” (20 USCS 6301 § 1001(2)); and (3) “closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers” (20 USCS 6301 § 1001(3)).

The implementation of NCLB would ultimately be carried out at the State level. Each State would adopt and implement its own plan, while still adhering to specific guidelines and regulations of NCLB. It would soon become evident to states that while NCLB provided local communities and school districts with greater discretion in how they could use their federal funds, the federal government would increasingly hold students, teachers, and principals more

accountable for student results, and in fact impose sanctions when schools failed to perform at proficient or advanced levels.

The following are specific regulations set forth by NCLB.

First, the Act mandates that any State receiving federal funding must submit a State plan to be approved by the USDOE (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(a)(1)). The plan must demonstrate that the State, its local educational agencies, and its schools have adopted, implemented, and carried out challenging academic standards and assessments (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(b)(1)(A), (3)(A)). To ensure that all students are making progress toward proficiency in English and math, states must develop and implement a single, statewide State accountability system, which includes creating an annual statewide assessment and a uniform averaging procedure (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(b)(2)(J)).

Second, students in public schools in grades 3-8 must be tested yearly in English and math. Students in grades 10-12 are further tested at least once in the same subjects (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(b)(3)(C)(v)(I)). Beginning in 2007-2008, all students must be tested in science, and at least once in grades 3-5; once again in grades 6-9; and a third time in grades 10-12 (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(b)(3)(C)(v)(I)(aa)(bb)(cc)).

Third, states must determine the number of students who comprise a subgroup, and define “what constitutes adequate yearly progress” (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(b)(2)(B)) in their local districts and schools. While NCLB provides states with the flexibility and authority to decide upon the minimum size requirements for a subgroup and the formula for determining AYP, NCLB clearly sets specific guidelines that states must follow. For example, the number of students in a category must “yield statistically reliable information” (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II)), and the number cannot be arbitrary or “reveal personally identifiable

information about the individual student” (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II)). States must establish a timeline for adequate yearly progress, and develop distinct, measurable, annual objectives for all students and subgroups to show their progress toward reaching proficiency in English and math by 2014. These yearly objectives must increase in equal increments over a period of twelve years beginning in 2002 (USCS 6311 § 1111(b)(2)(H)(i)).

Fourth, to ensure that schools and districts are held accountable for the progress of all students, NCLB defines the student groups from whom AYP determinations are made. These include economically disadvantaged students; students from major racial and ethnic groups; students with disabilities; and students with limited English proficiency (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II)(aa)(bb)(cc)(dd)). Because students are counted in each student group to which they belong, one student may belong to multiple groups. For each subject, there may be multiple AYP determinations for all students (i.e., the aggregate) and the other subgroups.

Fifth, NCLB sets specific parameters for states in determining how local districts and schools receive a positive AYP determination. For a public school and district to receive an affirmative AYP determination in English or math, each student subgroup must meet the following criteria: 1) at least a 95% student participation rate in the statewide examination (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(b)(2)(I)); 2) an additional graduation requirement (for secondary schools) or another academic indicator as designated by the State (for elementary and middle schools) (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(b)(2)(C)(vi)); and 3) the attainment of the State’s annual measurable objectives (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(b)(2)(G)(iii)). A group may also make AYP by reducing the percentage of non-proficient students “by 10 percent . . . from the proceeding school year” (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(b)(2)(I)(i)), which is also known as the NCLB Safe Harbor provision.

Schools and districts that fail to make AYP for two or more consecutive years must follow a required course of action to improve their school's performance (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(2)(I)(i)). Under NCLB, a school's accountability status determines its outcome. For every year that the school fails to make AYP, sanctions become increasingly severe. Once a school has been placed in the improvement category (i.e., Needing Improvement, Corrective Action, and Restructuring), the school must make AYP for two consecutive years in the same subject, either in the aggregate or in any subgroup, to improve its status (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(12)).

The following section outlines the specific sanctions placed on schools identified for Needing Improvement, Corrective Action, and Restructuring under NCLB.

Schools Identified for Needing Improvement Year 1

Schools that fail to make AYP for two consecutive years in English or math, either in the aggregate or any subgroup, are identified as Needing Improvement (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(1)(A)). NCLB requires that parents of students enrolled in the school be notified promptly of the following: 1) what the school's identification means; 2) the reasons for its identification; 3) how the school will address the problem of low achievement; and 4) how parents can become involved in addressing the academic issues, which have caused the school to be identified for Needing Improvement (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(6)).

In addition, the school must revise its two-year improvement plan, and address the subjects, grade levels, and student groups in which the school failed to make AYP (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(3)(i)). In revising its plan, the school must consult with parents and school staff. Developed no later than three months after the school has been identified for improvement (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(3)(A)), the plan must 1) analyze the reasons that the school failed to make

AYP; 2) specify annual, measurable goals and improvement targets for each group of students to ensure their success in making AYP; 3) incorporate improvement strategies based on scientifically based research; 4) provide high-quality professional development; 5) include strategies to promote effective parental involvement; 6) extend, when appropriate, activities during the school day that will meet the school's improvement objectives; 7) identify the necessary funds to implement the school plan; 8) incorporate a teacher mentoring program; 9) describe procedures for coordinating and monitoring the school plan; and 10) identify the responsibilities of the school, the district, and the State for supporting the implementation of the plan (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(3)(A)). Furthermore, the district must provide technical assistance to the school (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(3)(4)).

Schools accepting Title I funds that have been identified for Needing Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring are subject to greater sanctions than non-Title I schools. In addition to the abovementioned sanctions, a Title I school identified for Needing Improvement must offer school choice to all students if available in the district (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(1)(F)) and allocate 10% of the school's Title I funds to targeted professional development (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(3)(A)(iii)).

Schools Identified for Needing Improvement Year 2

In the following year, if the school identified as Needing Improvement fails to make AYP again based on the same criteria, further sanctions are placed on the school. In addition to the aforementioned sanctions, the school must revise its school improvement plan, based on new data and current findings (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(5)). School choice, if available, is offered to all students in Title I schools, and supplemental service options are offered to low-income students in Title I schools (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(5)(B)).

Schools in Corrective Action

If the school fails to make AYP for four consecutive years in the same subject, either in the aggregate or in any subgroup, then the school is identified for Corrective Action (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(7)(A)). Parents are notified. The district must provide technical assistance to the school. The school must revise its school improvement plan, continue to analyze its needs, and identify at least one Corrective Action step. These include the following: 1) replace school staff; 2) institute a new curriculum and provide professional development based on scientific research; 3) significantly decrease the management authority at the school; 4) appoint an outside expert to advise the school toward making AYP; 5) extend the school year or school day; and/or 6) restructure the internal organization of the school. For Title I schools, school choice is offered to all students if available, and supplemental services are provided to low-income students (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(7)(C)).

Schools in Restructuring

In the school's fifth consecutive year of not making AYP in English or math, either in the aggregate or any subgroup, the school must plan for restructuring (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(8)(B)). Restructuring involves fundamental change, such as reopening the school as a public charter school; replacing all or most of the school staff (including the principal) who are deemed at fault for the school's inability to make AYP; "entering into a contract with . . . a private management company, with a demonstrated record of effectiveness . . . ; [or] turning the operation of the school over to the State education agency, if . . . agreed . . . by the State" (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(8)(B)(iii)(iv)). The following year the school must implement its plan (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(8)(B)). Title I schools identified for Restructuring must continue to

provide school choice, if available in the district to all of its students, as well as supplemental services to their low-income students (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(8)(A)).

Annual Report Cards – Local and State Report Cards

As another measure of accountability, NCLB requires that schools and districts publish and disseminate on a yearly basis two reports (i.e., the local report card and the state report card) to parents of students and the public. The purpose of these reports is to keep parents and the public well-informed about the progress of all students in their schools and to measure the effectiveness of their schools (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(h)(1)(2)). Both reports provide information about how all students performed on state tests, the qualifications of the students' teachers, and how the school compares to other schools in the district and the State (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(h)(1)(2)).

Local Report Cards

While the district is responsible for publishing the state report cards, individual schools must provide parents with local report cards, which include the following information: 1) how students, in the district and in each school, perform on state assessments; 2) how students perform on tests (i.e., basic, proficient, or advanced); 3) and which schools have been identified as Needing Improvement, Corrective Action, and Restructuring (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(h)(2)). The report cards further contain information on achievement data that are broken down by student groups according to “race, ethnicity, gender, disability status, migrant status, English proficiency, and status as economically disadvantaged” (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(h)(1)(C)(i)). NCLB stipulates that local report cards must be available in a prompt manner to parents and to the public, no later than the beginning of each school year.

State Report Card

State report cards further provide parents and the public with another valuable source of

information including, “the percentage of students not tested” (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(h)(1)(C)(iii)); and the “graduation rates for secondary school students” (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(h)(1)(C)(vi)).

This card contains results of the state assessments by performance level (i.e., basic, proficient, or advanced); “the most recent 2-year trend in students achievement in each subject area, and for each grade level” ((20 USCS 6311 § 1111(h)(1)(C)(iv)); “a comparison between the actual achievement levels of each group of students...and the State’s annual measurable objectives” (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(h)(1)(C)(ii)); the performance of school districts with regard to making adequately yearly progress, and the names of schools identified for Needing Improvement, Corrective Action, and Restructuring (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(h)(1)(C)(vii)).

Additionally, this report states the professional qualifications of the student’s teachers, including, at a minimum, the following: 1) the teacher’s licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction; 2) the baccalaureate degree of the teacher and any other graduate certification held; and 3) the qualifications of any paraprofessional if the child receives services (20 USCS 6316 § 1111(h)). Further, should a teacher not be highly qualified, and the child receives instruction from that teacher for four consecutive weeks or more, then the child’s parent must be notified in a timely manner (20 USCS 6316 § 1111(h)(6)(B)).

Finally, NCLB grants states the choice of providing parents, students, and other members of the public with additional pieces of information that would be helpful in informing the public of the progress that all students in their local schools and districts are making toward achieving proficiency in English and math (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(h)(1)(D)).

It is clear that No Child Left Behind is a far-reaching reform that affects every state and public school district in this nation. In its quest to establish stronger accountability for results, it is evident that NCLB establishes for all states “high academic standards for students’ academic achievement; measures progress toward proficiency against those standards; and holds schools and districts accountable for the progress of all student groups” (MADESE, 2007a, p. 1). While there may be increased discretionary authority afforded to states in how they devise their individual plans, in their choices of statewide assessments, in their determination of how many students constitute a subgroup, in the number and types of academic indicators used to determine AYP, and in their decision to use other information in their local and state report cards, at the same time, NCLB is very stringent in requiring every public school in the country to pursue the goal of closing the achievement gap, and lays down specific guidelines, by which a school is to be assessed, as well as the steps to be taken when progress is inadequate. NCLB is a comprehensive reform act that attempts to redress what other past reforms failed to accomplish: to ensure a greater equity for all students and to close the achievement gap, once and for all.

Subsection B: No Child Left Behind and Its Impact on the Massachusetts Education Reform Act and the Massachusetts Public Schools

Massachusetts’ accountability system is an example of this type of legislation. Although MERA predates NCLB, it is through the general statutes of MERA that the specific NCLB guidelines are implemented. This Act has impacted MERA and the Massachusetts public school system in three defining ways: 1) testing requirements; 2) criteria for high school graduation; 3) identification of underperforming schools and districts, and the sanctions imposed on them. The impact on the former will be briefly discussed, but the main focus in this section as it relates to

the overall dissertation topic is on the impact of NCLB on individual schools in the Massachusetts public school system.

Testing Requirements for Massachusetts Public Schools

To begin with, all students in the tested grades who are educated with Massachusetts public funds must participate in MCAS (Nellhaus, 2008a). This includes students with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency (Nellhaus, 2008a). While students with disabilities and with limited English proficiency have taken MCAS since 1998 (as required by MERA), NCLB further reinforces this State law (MADESE, 2006c). Today, even students with the most significant disabilities will take a form of the MCAS, known as the MCAS Alternative Assessment (MADESE, 2006c). For the vast majority of students with disabilities, their IEP or 504 teams will dictate whether or not these students need accommodations for MCAS, and if required, what types of accommodations will be necessary (Nellhaus, 2008a).

The only exception to this testing requirement applies to students with limited English proficiency, who first enrolled in U.S. schools after March 1, 2007 (Nellhaus, 2008b). Considered as first-year students with limited English proficiency, these students only take the math and science MCAS exams. The English and history MCAS exams are optional (Nellhaus, 2008b). While their scores are not included in the MCAS school and district summary results, in the following year their results are assessed as those of all other students: they will be required to take MCAS in English, math, science, and history (Nellhaus, 2008a).

This Act not only influences who gets tested in the Massachusetts public schools but also how often and in what subject areas students are tested. MCAS is no longer given only to students in grades 4, 8, and 10 (Mass. Gen. Laws. ch. 69, § 1I, 1993). In response to NCLB's decree that all students be tested annually in reading and math, beginning in 2005 (20 USCS 6311 §

1111(b)(3)(C)(vii)), all students attending Massachusetts public schools in grades 3-8 and 10 are now tested each year in either English language arts and/or reading, and math. Student in grades 5, 8, 9, and 10 further take a science MCAS test in response to the NCLB stipulation that states are to administer science tests annually, to students, beginning in 2007 (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(b)(3)(A)). While NCLB only requires that states test annually in mathematics, either in reading or language arts, and science, the Act at the same time stipulates that states must adopt and implement challenging academic content standards, create tests based on those standards, and use “the same academic assessments...to measure the achievements of all children” (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(b)(3)(C)(i)). To attain this goal, Massachusetts has chosen to add history as an additional subject to the required list and to test students in history in grades 5, 8, 10, and 11.

Table 1 summarizes the 2007-2008 testing requirements for MCAS at each grade level.

Table 1

2007-2008 MCAS Testing Requirements Per Grade Level

Grade Level	English Composition	English Reading	Math	Science	History
Grade 3		X	X		
Grade 4	X	X	X		
Grade 5		X	X	X	X
Grade 6		X	X		
Grade 7	X	X	X		X
Grade 8		X	X	X	
Grade 9				X	
Grade 10	X	X	X	X	X

Graduation Requirements

As a result of the new testing policy, the graduation requirements for high school students have been redefined. By 2012, the requirements will be set at a much higher bar than in the past. The transition is being implemented gradually. Presently, by the end of grade 10, all students must participate in a science MCAS test in at least one of the following areas: biology, chemistry, introductory physics, or technology/engineering (MADESE, 2008c). Beginning with the graduating class of 2010, all students must meet the local graduation criteria as established by the student's school district, which includes attendance, course completion, and satisfactory grades. Students must also pass the three high stakes assessments (i.e., the English, math, and science MCAS) to receive their high school diplomas (MADESE, 2006a). Finally, students in the graduating class of 2012 will be required to meet all of the aforementioned criteria, take the History and Social Science high school MCAS test by grade 10, and pass the history MCAS test (MADESE, 2006a). In fact, by 2012, all students will have to take four high stakes tests (i.e., the English, math, science, and history MCAS) and pass them in order to receive their high school diplomas.

Redefining the Accountability Status for Underperforming Schools and Districts in Massachusetts and the Sanctions Imposed on Them

Under NCLB and MERA, the 2007 AYP and accountability status determinations for schools in grades 1-8 are based on four criteria: the 95% student participation rate in state assessments, either Massachusetts' performance target or the student group's own improvement target, and the additional mandated Massachusetts' requirement of a 92% attendance rate (MADESE, 2007c). For high schools, the additional indicator chosen by Massachusetts is the four-year graduation rate (MADESE, 2007d). AYP determinations are additionally made for students both in the

aggregate and in their subgroups. While NCLB clearly specifies the categories for a student group, its exact size is left at the discretion of the State, subject to guidelines that ensure statistical validity of results. Massachusetts sets the size of a subgroup or student group at forty students or more (MADESE, 2007d).

As mandated by NCLB and MERA, schools are identified for Improvement, Corrective Action, and Restructuring if they fail to make adequate yearly progress in English and math, either in the aggregate of any subgroup for two or more consecutive years (MADESE, 2007c). While school-level AYP determinations are still based on all grades assessed, district-level AYP determinations as of 2006 are comprised of these grade spans – grades 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. A district will be granted the positive No Status category if it makes AYP in the same subject for at least one grade span for two consecutive years (MADESE, 2007d). If the district fails to make AYP in English or math in all three grade spans for students in the aggregate or any subgroup for two consecutive years, then the district will enter Improvement Status (USDOE, 2007a). This does not apply to Massachusetts' districts that consist of a single school. The AYP determinations of single school districts are based on all grades assessed (MADESE, 2007d).

For the most part, Massachusetts uses the same criteria to identify schools for Improvement, Corrective Action, and Restructuring. Please refer to pages 40-43 in *Schools Identified for Needing Improvement Year 1*, *Schools Identified for Needing Improvement Year 2*, *Schools in Corrective Action*, and *Schools in Restructuring* for a more detailed explanation of the accountability status and required actions that are placed on Massachusetts schools that have failed to make AYP in English or math, either in the aggregate or in the subgroup, for two or more consecutive years (20 USCS 6301 § 1001(1), 1001(2), 1001(3), 1111(a)(1), 1111(b)(1), 1111(b)(2), 1111(b)(3), 1116(b)(2), 1116(b)(12)).

Under NCLB, states have been afforded the discretionary authority to use other indicators to pinpoint schools that are in need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring with the caveat that these criteria “do not reduce or change the schools that would otherwise be” (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(a)(1)(B)) labeled for Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring. States can further impose additional sanctions than the ones prescribed under NCLB. With greater authority to identify underperforming schools and to impose further sanctions, individual States would be able to hold local districts and schools more accountable for the progress of all students. In turn, this increased accountability for results, would provide the federal government with another means to carry out its desired goal of finally closing the achievement gap.

The following section highlights the extra measures and sanctions that Massachusetts places on schools labeled as Corrective Action and Restructuring under NCLB. Based on its preliminary 2007 results, there were 102 schools in Corrective Action and Restructuring in Massachusetts, of which some schools continued to exhibit little or no improvement (MADESE, 2007e). Alarming, these schools had extremely low levels of performances in both their student groups and the aggregate. In light of the increasing number of low-performing schools each year, Massachusetts in October 2006 amended 603 Mass. Code Regs. 2.00 (2006), the Regulation on Underperforming Schools and Schools Districts. Both the “criteria by which schools are identified as being in need of state intervention and the categorical term that identifies” (MADESE, 2007e, p. 1). Under these new changes, “when a school is identified for Corrective Action or Restructuring in English language arts and/or math for students in the aggregate as a result of failing, for four or more years, to make AYP in the same subject(s)” (603 Mass. Code Regs. 2.03, 2006), the school will automatically be determined as “chronically underperforming.” The Board will no longer need to assess whether or not the school, deemed as

underperforming, has demonstrated significant, steady improvement (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1J, 1993). Now, a school that is identified in Corrective Action or Restructuring in English and/or math for students in the aggregate, will be found in accordance with the abovementioned state law to be chronically underperforming school and “to have failed to demonstrate significant improvement consistent with its approved remedial plan within 24 months after Board approval of its plan” (MADESE, 2006b, p. 1). As a result, the school will be designated as a Commonwealth Priority School (CPS) or a Priority 1 school, and the State will assume authority for the school.

As detailed in *Schools in Corrective Action* and *Schools in Restructuring*, Priority 1 schools must follow prescribed *Corrective Action steps*. Within thirty days of its designation as a CPS, a fact finding team from MADESE will review and assess “the current capacity and willingness of the district, school, and community leaders to plan for, lead, and productively engage the school’s faculty, administrators, students, parents and community institutions in appropriate school improvement efforts” (603 Mass. Code Regs. 2.03, 2006). Next, the Commissioner will appoint a State Review Panel, which will make recommendations about the current leadership, the school’s improvement plan, and the necessary steps and supports for improving school performance (603 Mass. Code Regs. 2.03, 2006). The State at this point will have taken direct control of the school, and as such, has the authority to replace the principal, if found relevant to the school’s inability to make adequate progress and to “revise existing policies, structures, ... and practices” (603 Mass. Code Regs. 2.03, 2006).

Furthermore, the superintendent of the district must submit to the Board the district’s plan to improve the performance of students at the school, no later than six months after the school has been designated as a CPS or a Chronically Underperforming School (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, §

1J, 1993). The plan must include the following elements: 1) greater discretionary authority for the principal to select and assign staff to positions without regard to seniority; 2) increased monetary control for the principal to implement the school improvement plan successfully; 3) “curricula that are aligned to state frameworks in core academic areas” (603 Mass. Code Regs. 2.03, 2006); 4) a systematic program for analyzing interim assessment at least four to six times a year in English and math; 5) a system for tracking and analyzing assessment results; 6) a school schedule for student learning, of which 90 minutes are allotted per day in each subject; 7) after-school tutoring and homework help for students; 8) two full-time subject area coaches in English and math, who are responsible for providing faculty with continual observations and feedback; 9) periodic evaluations on school staff; and 10) a weekly and annual work schedule for teachers for “regular, frequent, department and/or grade-level faculty meetings to discuss individual student progress, curriculum issues, instructional practice, and school-wide improvement efforts” (603 Mass. Code Regs. 2.03, 2006). Training and support for school leaders are further provided for principals appointed to lead a CPS or Chronically Underperforming School (603 Mass. Code Regs. 2.03, 2006).

As another amendment to this regulation, the Commissioner can also designate any school with a Low-Performance Mathematics Program as CPS. With regard to this regulation, Massachusetts further added other sanctions for schools, in which students continue to perform poorly in the math MCAS. Under 603 Mass. Code Regs. 2.05 (2006), any middle or high school, in which 30 percent or more of the students fail the MCAS mathematics exam, excluding those students in special education, with limited English proficiency, or who have not been enrolled in the school for at least two school years, “and which failed to make AYP in mathematics for students in the aggregate of any student subgroup during the most recent accountability cycle”

(MADESE, 2006b, p. 8) will be considered a school with a Low-Performing Mathematics Program.

A school with a Low-Performing Mathematics Program must abide to the following procedures. Math teachers at this school must take the next Mathematics Content Assessment that is offered (MADESE, 2006b). This examination requirement applies to any math teacher in a middle or high school that has been designated as CPS. Results from these tests will be used diagnostically by the individual teacher and the principal to develop or revise professional development plans, “as provided in the Recertification Regulations, 603 CMR 44.04(4)” (MADESE, 2006b, p. 8).

A CPS has two avenues to exit its status. The first is making AYP in both English and math for students in the aggregate for two consecutive years. Only then can the school’s governing body request termination of its designation (603 Mass. Code Regs. 2.03, 2006). Alternatively, although the school may not have met all of its AYP targets for students in the aggregate, if it has demonstrated significant improvement in student performance for four or more years, then the school’s governing body may request termination of the school’s status based on this criterion (603 Mass. Code Regs. 2.03, 2006). In both situations, the Commissioner decides whether the school’s designation remains or can be lifted. This mechanism applies only to schools in Corrective Action. These alternatives do not exist for schools in Restructuring (MADESE, 2006b).

In summary, for each consecutive year that a school fails to make AYP, stricter guidelines with more severe consequences are placed on schools, especially Title I schools that have an identifiable percentage of students from low-income families or living in poverty. Principals working in a school that has failed to make AYP for four or more consecutive years in English

and/or math, either for students in the aggregate or subgroup, must at a minimum notify parents about the status; develop an improvement plan with parents, school staff, and others; institute a new curriculum based on scientifically based research, and offer staff professional development (MADESE, 2007c). Title I schools must further offer school choice to parent, if available to the district, and SES to their low-income students (MADESE, 2007c). If the principal is further deemed to be “a significant role in the under-performance of the school” (Mass. Gen. Law ch. 69, § 1J, 1993), then she may be immediately removed. Today, under MERA, when a school is identified for Corrective Action or Restructuring in English and/or math for students in the aggregate and fails to make AYP for four or more years in the same subject, the Commissioner will designate the school as a CPS. As described in the paragraphs above, additional sanctions are put in place.

Massachusetts has revised its criteria for identifying *chronically underperforming schools* not only to hold schools more accountable for the performance of all students but also to assist underperforming schools immediately by providing them with additional supports, as well as state intervention when a school is deemed incapable of affecting the necessary changes from within. In spite of these efforts, Massachusetts, like many other states in the nation, faces an alarming number of schools identified for Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring each year. Since 2002, the total number of schools identified for Improvement, Corrective Action or Restructuring in Massachusetts has risen from 202 to 673 in 2007 (MADESE, 2008d). Of those schools identified in 2007, 303 were the result of overall student performance, while 370 were due to the performance of subgroups. Of the schools identified for subgroups in 2007, the Special Education and Low Income subgroups were the most common: About 55% were

identified for the performance of Special Education, while about 50% were identified for the performance of Low Income (MADESE, 2008d).

Further, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) notes that the number of schools identified for Needing Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring is on the rise throughout the country. In 2005-2006, an estimated 2,700 of the 54,000 Title I schools nationwide were in Corrective Action or in the Restructuring status (GAO, 2007). In 2006-2007, that number rose, and 4,509 Title I schools nationwide failed to make AYP for four or more years. Of those school identified in 2006, 2,330 schools were in Corrective Action, 937 schools were planning for Restructuring, and 1,242 schools were in the Restructuring status (GAO, 2007). As state proficiency targets rise to 100% by 2014, GAO predicts that nationwide the number of schools in Correction Action and Restructuring will increase. More schools will be required to take major steps to improve (GAO, 2007).

For the purpose of this dissertation, the categorical name as assigned by NCLB will be used. Therefore, a school in Corrective Action is a school that has failed to make AYP in the same subject, either in the aggregate or any subgroup, for four consecutive years. As described above, a Massachusetts public school in Corrective Action is subject to greater sanctions than those prescribed under NCLB. Additionally, for principals working in Title I schools, there is greater accountability when schools fails to make AYP. In this particular study, the work life and demands of a first year principal in a Title I school in Corrective Action will be examined.

Part Four of Section One: The Impact of NCLB on the Roles and Responsibilities of Massachusetts Principals

As a result of these profound changes in the education system, the role of the principal has become increasingly complex and demanding, adding a host of new challenges to a job that has

never been an easy one by any account. Massachusetts principals today are faced with the challenges of increasing student achievement across the board (regardless of their socioeconomic or cultural backgrounds), while at the same time decreasing the test-score gap between disadvantaged students and their more advantaged peers, as well as making sure that all teachers are highly qualified (Anthes, 2002; Brown, 2006). Hence, under MERA, all principals and especially those in underperforming schools must be vigilant of MCAS scores and focused on making AYP.

These demands are reshaping the job responsibilities and the role of the principal. The Wallace Foundation 2006 report found that most superintendents and principals across the country believe that the most essential components defining the principal's job are the following: 1) making sure that teachers use effective teaching practices; 2) hiring teachers who are competent in both their subjects areas and instructional practices; 3) offering staff sound professional development; and 4) having a strong knowledge base of using student data to improve instruction and increase student achievement (Johnson, Arumi, & Ott, 2006).

As more pressure is placed on the Massachusetts public school systems to ensure that *all* students achieve and perform at high levels, school leaders in Massachusetts face increased instructional responsibilities, more duties, and greater pressures. As instructional leaders and master teachers, Massachusetts principals today must know how to use data effectively. They must know what types of tests are best used for diagnostic purposes, and which ones are most effective in identifying in student performance (Anthes, 2002; DiPaolo, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2004). As master teachers, they must be able "to translate assessment data into effective instructional strategies for their school staff" (Anthes, 2002, p. 4), in order to boost the performance and learning of all students. Massachusetts principals must further stay abreast of

current professional development, instructional strategies, and educational practices, which will help provide teachers with the most effective instruction for all of their students (Houle, 2006).

As culture builders, Massachusetts principals must foster, “enhance, and monitor the professional skills and knowledge of their faculty” (DiPaola et al., 2004, p. 7) and work with them to establish common goals and expectations.

Finally, with the mandate for all students to reach proficiency in English and math by 2014, there is incredible pressure placed on Massachusetts principals to meet those requirements. While personally being held accountable for *all* student performance, principals have the added responsibility “of maintaining staff morale and assisting teachers in dealing with stress and public scrutiny that tougher accountability measures . . . bring” (Anthes, 2002, p. 3). Indeed, the role of the Massachusetts principal has changed. It has expanded from merely performing managerial duties (i.e., student discipline, budget and finance, interviewing and hiring, supervision and evaluation, lunch duty, and scheduling) to an increased set of responsibilities (instructional leadership, data analysis, and curriculum development). Adding to all of this is the pressure of producing positive results (making AYP) in a timely manner. Secondary school principals in Massachusetts have reported working longer hours, and on average, more than 62 hours a week (Groff et al., 2002), while the U.S. Department of Labor (2008) states that “about 1 in 3 education administrators work more than 40 hours a week and often supervise school activities at night and on weekends [with] most administrators work[ing] year around” (p. 4). The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) (1998) in their ten-year study of the K-8 principal found that the typical principal puts in 9-hour days and 54-hour weeks. According to Gougeon (2005), in order to function effectively in a reform environment, Massachusetts administrators “have to acquire an array of leadership skills, such as articulating a

vision, developing shared decision making, systems analysis, staff development, performance standards for teachers, mentoring teachers, curriculum alignment, and addressing students' failure" (p. 30). Principals report that some of these skills, such as analyzing data and aligning curriculum are ones that they have not acquired. Thus, "trying to learn a new role while simultaneously being held accountable for the implementation of education reform" (Gougeon, 2005, p. 30) makes the job increasingly more complex, demanding, and time consuming.

With state assessment tests, principals are judged to a degree on how well all students perform as the designation of their schools' accountability status relies on these tests (Gougeon, 2005, p. 29). These dynamics have changed the relationships within schools and school systems. As 2014 fast approaches and all students must reach proficiency in English and math, principals must acquire an array of new skills and be prepared to use them in order to meet the complex dimensions of the job and to ensure that no child is left behind (Krajewski, 2008; Terry, 2008).

Section Two: Corrective Action and the Massachusetts Principal

Part One of Section Two: The Challenges and Increased Job Responsibilities of Massachusetts Principals in Schools in Corrective Action

The array of leadership skills and the arduous tasks of the principal's job are only exacerbated and made exponentially more demanding when working in an underperforming school, such as a school in Corrective Action (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore, & Lash, 2007; Fullan, 2006). Under MERA, for a school to be relinquished from its Corrective Action status, it must receive an affirmative AYP determination for two consecutive years (MADESE, 2007d). If the school fails to produce significant improvements within this time frame, then the state may declare the school to be *chronically under-performing* (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1J, 1993). Upon that declaration, the following steps may occur 1) replacing all or most staff, which may include the

principal; 2) entering into a contract with a private management company; 3) turning the school over to the state education agency, and/or 4) re-opening the school as a public charter school (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1J, 1993). For further details, please refer to the section entitled, *Redefining the Accountability Status for Underperforming schools and Districts in Massachusetts and the Sanctions Imposed on Them* on pages 48 to 54.

Because *turning around* a school in Corrective Action calls for deep and comprehensive changes, including a significant increase of gains in student achievement, this type of challenge is different and far more difficult than merely undertaking school improvement (Fullan, 2006). It requires a principal with a particular mindset, a set of specialized skills, continuous training and professional development, and support from key groups, such as parents, teachers, teacher unions, administrators, central office, and outside community agencies, as well as adequate funding to be successful in transforming the school (Brown, 2006; Burbach & Butler, 2005; Fullan, 2006; Peterson & Kelley, 2001).

Research (Burbach & Butler, 2005; Elmore, 1996; Fullan, 1999, 2003, 2005, 2006) shows that a principal who is capable of *turning around* a school understands organizational change, *big-picture* thinking, and grasps “the social, political and crosscurrents at work” (Burbach & Butler, 2005, p. 25) in her school and community. This principal also understands how to create a system and a culture of transparent data-gathering in which data are used by teachers, administrators, and staff to make informed, sound decisions on teaching and learning (Fullan, 2005). She is further someone who understands “the unique challenges faced by academically underachieving children” (Burbach & Butler, 2005, p. 25), and children with disabilities. As a result of this knowledge and specialized skill set, she understands what supports, structures, and

incentives are required to turnaround her school and to ensure high standards of teaching and learning for all students.

Part Two of Section Two: Studies on Schools in Corrective Action in Massachusetts

In the Mass Insight Education and Research Institute 2007 report, which studied the current strategies of turning around the nation's most chronically underperforming schools, the authors highlighted five different schools across Massachusetts for their work in significantly raising student achievement (Calkins et al., 2007). They focused particularly on Brighton High School in Boston, Charlestown High School in Boston, Lowell Middlesex Charter School in Lowell, Sterling Middle School in Quincy, and University Park Campus School in Worcester. Although each school is unique with its own culture, set of problems, and different personalities, the principals in each of these schools identified the following practices as invaluable in making great progress in their schools: 1) focusing on key issues affecting student performance; 2) creating a positive culture and a supportive structure for strengthening student-adult relationships; 3) formulating a system to analyze and use data to improve instruction for all students; 4) implementing proven practices for underperforming students; and 5) being relentless in the pursuit of their goals (Calkins et al., 2007).

In the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy (RCERP) 2003 report, nine schools (i.e., Academy of the Pacific Rim, Accelerated Learning Lab, Boston Arts Academy, Fenway high School, Lynn Classical High School, Media & Technology Charter High, Sabis International, Somerville High School, and University Park Campus) were attributed to be the highest performing, non-selective urban schools serving secondary students in Massachusetts districts with high concentrations of low-income and minority students" (p. 4). While University Park far surpassed any of the eight other schools when comparing student achievement, the other

eight schools in this study should, nevertheless, be noted for their steady improvement on student performance.

Based on yearlong interviews and site visits, researchers found five common practices employed across all schools (RCERP, 2003). First, principals in these schools established high standards and expectations for their students and teachers (RCERP, 2003). Second, each school developed a personalized culture of teaching and learning and offered significant supports for teachers and students (RCERP, 2003). Teacher support included working with mentors, having a common planning time to meet and discuss student work, and being assigned to literacy coaches (RCERP, 2003). Students were further assisted by having teachers come to school early and stay late to tutor them, having tutors available to them during the day, and having tutoring sessions before and after school, specifically for struggling students. Third, all schools have small class sizes and small learning communities. These structures helped to develop strong, trusting relationships between students and teachers, and provided teachers with the means to respond to students' needs immediately. Fourth, in all schools, curricula are defined and shaped by examining student data. Principals as well as literacy and math coaches worked with teachers to analyze student work and to make adjustments in their teaching and in developing unit plans. Finally, in all schools there are strong relationships with the community, engagement of parents, and support from higher education institutions that are partners with the schools and working toward supporting the schools' educational goals and their programs (RCERP, 2003).

Perhaps, the most highly acclaimed school known for its remarkable progress and student achievement in the Calkins' et al. (2007) and RCERP (2003) studies is the University Park Campus School (UPCS). Recognized as a national model by the Education Trust, the Alliance for Excellent Education, and Newsweek, UPCS has sustained an unparalleled record of academic

success since its inception in 1997 (Calkins et al., 2007; RCERP, 2003; “University Park Campus School,” 2006). Serving 200 students from grades 7-12, UPSC is a small school, of which 73% qualify for free lunch and 67% speak English as a second language (“University Park Campus School,” 2006). The school contains a racially diverse student population, of which 37% of the school students are Latino; 18% are Asian American; 11% are African-American; and the majority of white students are recent transplants from Eastern Europe, who have limited English proficiency (“University Park Campus School,” 2006). UPSC is also situated in one of the highest crime areas in Worcester. Despite its location, high rates of poverty (73%), large minority enrollment (66%), and the significant number of students entering UPSC with low academic skills and limited English proficiency, this school continues to excel and to progress in student achievement as demonstrated by its increasing MCAS scores, high attendance rates, low dropout rates, and the number of alumni attending two-year and four-year colleges (RCERP, 2003).

The “school’s dropout rate and mobility rates are virtually zero” (“University Park Campus School,” 2005, p. 4). From 2002 to 2005, not one UPSC student failed the 10th grade MCAS exams (MADESE, 2007f). Averaging test scores from 2002-2005 show that 89% of UPSC students scored at proficient and advanced levels on the 10th grade MCAS math exam compared to 31% of students in Worcester Public Schools and 54% across the state (“University Park Campus School,” 2006). In English, 89% of UPSC students scored at proficient and advanced levels compared to 38% of students in the district and 61% statewide.

With such stellar achievements, it is highly informative to learn from the present and previous leaders of this school as what they perceive to be essential to their success. Former principal Donna Rodrigues, a longtime resident of the neighborhood and veteran teacher in the Worcester

Public Schools for 28 years, and current principal June Eressy, who taught English language arts and social studies in Worcester for 13 years before becoming principal in 2002, credits their school's continual success and unparalleled record of student achievement to "an exceptional school culture and academic program that refuses to let any student fail to achieve high standards" ("University Park Campus School," 2006, p. 1). Both principals fervently agree that UPSC's success was not the result of any financial miracle, for the school operates on the same per pupil budget as other district high schools in Worcester ("University Park Campus School," 2005). Other factors which contribute to the success of UPSC include 1) small class sizes; 2) a data-driven curriculum; 3) internships; 4) community service; 5) a strong partnership with Clark University; 6) parent and community engagement; 7) a focused curriculum on reading in grades 7 and 8; 8) an extended school day; and finally 9) capable school leaders (RCERP, 2003).

Part Three of Section Two: Leadership Qualities of Principals in "Turnaround Schools"

Both Calkins et al. (2007) and RCERP (2003) researched how the principals in these chronically underperforming schools were successful in significantly raising student achievement. In both of these studies, six common leadership qualities were demonstrated by all principals. First, the principals set high standards and expectations for student learning, and held all teachers and students accountable for learning and for making progress. Second, principals helped to cultivate a shared belief with their teachers that *all* students in their schools can attain a high level of achievement. Third, principals established a focused curriculum by analyzing student work, and developed supports, such as providing teachers with a common planning time and curriculum coaches. With these supports, teachers could discuss student work readily and had a deep understanding of how to analyze data, specifically, how to make decisions on their teaching and learning based on student work. Fourth, to some degree, all principals engaged in

participatory decision-making with their staff. Fifth, all principals were clear about their vision and able to communicate it well to their teachers. Finally, all principals were persistent and adamant in their pursuit to improve teaching and learning: it was a non-negotiable for them (Calkins et al., 2007; RCERP, 2003).

It is important to note that for many principals in the Calkins et al. (2007) and the RCERP (2003) studies, this was not their first principalship. Donna Rodrigues and June Eressy, the former and current principals of UPSC respectively, were already established and known by school community members (teachers, parents, administrators, and other community members) as reputable teachers and active community members (Center of Resource Management [CRM], n.d.). Both women had a profound understanding of the school's culture and its community and had established relationships with school members before moving steadily into their new leadership positions. As residents of the community and veteran teachers of Worcester Public Schools, Donna Rodrigues and June Eressy knew the system and understood its values, behavioral norms, and cast of characters. They had established trusting relationships with many school community members (CRM, n.d.). These factors all contributed to their success in turning around their school.

Research by Elmore and Fullan on Effective Principals and Implementing Successful Change

Works by Elmore (1996) and Fullan (2002) further support the findings from the Calkin et al. (2007) and RCERP (2003) studies, demonstrating how it is the principal who plays a key leadership role in the efforts to improve student achievement and in transforming schools. Elmore (1996), who reviewed two major school reforms in the past (i.e., the Progressive Movement and the National Science Foundation curriculum reform projects), found that these two attempts of massive change failed because “solving the problem of scale means substantially

changing...incentive structures” (p. 1). Drawing upon Lawrence Cremin’s *The Transformation of the American School* (1961) as well as large-scale curriculum reforms of the 1950’s and 1960’s in the United States, Elmore (1996) offered four recommendations for addressing the issue of large-scale change and improving practice in education.

First, Elmore (1996) recognized that a key flaw in these earlier attempts at large-scale reform “was to rely almost exclusively on the intrinsic commitment of talented and highly motivated teachers to carry the burden of reform” (p. 18). Teachers cannot be solo practitioners, and therefore, principals must “create strong professional and social normative structures for good teaching practice” (Elmore, 1996, p. 18).

Second, to cultivate norms of good practice, Elmore (1996) suggests that principals must “develop organizational structures that intensify and focus, rather than dissipate and scatter, intrinsic motivation to engage in challenging practice” (p. 19). Particularly, for larger schools principals must create more variations in structure (i.e., smaller schools or “a school within a school”). These structures will help to provide teachers with more opportunities to engage in dialogue about student work and to “force them to sort out issues of practice” (Elmore, 1996, p. 19).

Third, to accomplish this task requires a principal who recognizes what excellent teaching practices look like and is capable of creating “intentional processes for reproduction of successes” (Elmore, 1996, p. 20). This means that the principal has a deep understanding of her culture, recognizes the complexity of change, and continues to provide exposure to new practices at a rate in which teachers can absorb. This may require “the creation of professional networks to support the practice of teachers who are in the process of changing their practice, or connecting the more advanced with the less advanced through some sort of mentoring scheme” (Elmore,

1996, p. 21). Clearly, the principal has an understanding of her existing school culture, its cast of characters, and the impact of change on its organizational members. The effective principal in Elmore's model can envision what the school will look like and helps her staff to "visualize ways in which they can be better" (King & Blumer, 2000, p. 357).

Finally, an effective principal understands that "change involves learning and...all change involves coming to understand and to be good at something new" (Fullan & Miles, 1992, p. 749). Therefore, she "create[s] structures that promote learning of new practices and systems that support them" (Elmore, 1996, p. 25). This may involve providing staff with opportunities to acquire additional knowledge, time to learn their required tasks, and time to observe others involved in the new practice.

Adding to Elmore's research on effective principals is Fullan's (2002) lessons on change and the effective principal. According to Fullan (2002), educators for some time believed that "principals must be instructional leaders if they are to be effective leaders needed for sustained innovation" (p. 16). However, in this era of high-stakes testing and increased accountability, Fullan (2002) contends that "only principals who are equipped to handle a complex, rapidly changing environment can implement the reforms that lead to sustained improvement in student achievement" (p. 16). It is here that Fullan (2002) refers to the Cultural Change Principal as the principal of the future. He (2002) argues that characterizing instructional leadership as the principal's central role is far too narrow and only a beginning step for improving student learning. To create a school and community of highly motivated and engaged learners requires a principal who can fundamentally transform the "learning cultures of [the] school and of the teaching profession itself" (Fullan, 2002, p. 17). These goals can be accomplished by a Cultural Change Principal, who is a leader possessing five necessary components: "moral purpose; an

understanding of the change process; the ability to improve relationships; knowledge creation and sharing; and coherence making” (Fullan, 2002, p. 17). A teacher who embraces these five characteristics is an effective principal, capable of implementing and sustaining large-scale change.

A Cultural Change Principal has first and foremost a moral purpose, which is “social responsibility to others and the environment” (Fullan, 2002, p. 17). A principal who leads with moral purpose is concerned with closing the achievement gap between higher and lower performing students. She is further focused on making a positive difference in not only her school but also in her entire district, which exemplifies her moral commitment and social responsibility to others. Similar to Sergiovanni’s (2006) “servant leadership,” the Cultural Change Principal has a deep moral purpose and is a “leader of leaders, follower of ideas, minister of values, and servant to the followership” (p. 19). Both Sergiovanni’s (2006) and Fullan’s (2002) characterizations of an effective principal stress the importance of having moral authority, which in essence drives the leadership practice of the principal. Further, both Fullan (1999) and Sergiovanni (2006) agree that “without tending to the moral imperative there can be no organizational character, and without character a school can be neither good nor effective” (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 15).

Second, Fullan’s (2002) Cultural Change Principal has a deep understanding of change and how it affects the organization and the people involved. She realizes that transforming a school involves changing the school culture (Barth, 2002; Saphier & King, 1985), which requires “changing what people in the organization value and how they work together to accomplish it” (Fullan, 2002, p. 18). This process begins by improving all relationships in her school. The Cultural Change Principal realizes that change is not easy and will require hard work from not

only herself but also from her teachers, parents, students, and other community members (Fullan, 1999, 2003, 2005).

The effective principal, therefore, works diligently to build constructive relationships with all members, including those who may think differently than she does. This entails developing a full range of emotional intelligence domains, “especially self-management of emotions and empathy towards others” (Fullan, 2002, p. 18). Her abilities to motivate, energize, and forge relationships with otherwise, disaffected and disconnected school members are vital to building and improving lasting relationships with all school members. As a result of mastering this skill set, teachers, parents, students, and other community members who may think differently and have varying opinions feel that the principal genuinely listens to them, cares for them, and wants to work with them to improve teaching and learning (Barth, 2002; Saphier & King, 1985; Sergiovanni, 1984, 2006). In turn, these interactions have positive effects on the school climate, and a collaborative culture begins to develop, in which people feel valued, listened to, and respected. A Cultural Change Principal benefits from high emotional intelligence and works with all of her school members to bring about deep, lasting change.

Third, an effective principal must know how to create and share knowledge so that individuals are continuing to add to their knowledge base and to improve. Both Elmore (1996) and Fullan (2002) describe an effective principal as a lifelong learner. She creates structures and conditions that promote the learning of new practices, builds incentive systems to support learning, and shares her knowledge with teachers (Elmore, 1996; Fullan, 2002). These activities may include engaging and encouraging her staff in action research and “implement[ing] inquiry groups among the staff” (Fullan, 2002, p. 18). Thus, by modeling and encouraging continuous

learning, the principal demonstrates to her staff the importance of creating an environment and culture that is focused on improving the teaching and learning for all of its members.

Finally, Fullan (2002) identifies an effective leader as a coherence-maker. Although “coherence is an essential component of complexity” (Fullan, 2002, p. 19), according to Fullan (2002) coherence can never be completely achieved. As a result, a principal who embodies this particular trait understands the give-and-take of relationships, and the inherent tensions that are often associated with resolving difficult problems but are necessary to bring about change. Learning how to minimize the “distracters” and to manage conflicts productively is vital to moving a school forward (Fullan, 1999, 2003). A principal who has “coherence-making” abilities appreciates the creative potential of diverse ideas, but at the same time “strive[s] to focus energy and achieve greater alignment” (Fullan, 2002, p. 19). In essence, the Cultural Change Principal is attuned to the various effects associated with leading a culture of change, and uses them to her advantage to propel her school forward.

In summary, the experiences of the successful principals in the Calkins et al. (2007) and RCERP (2003) studies as well as research from Elmore (1996) and Fullan (2002) can serve as valuable lessons and an important guide to principals confronting similar issues and trying to bring about large-scale change. Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind that each school and each principal face a unique set of challenges (Tooms, 2003). Not all beginning principals benefit from having such an extensive preparation for their new roles as did the former and current principals of UPSC. In many cases the principal will be new to the school and even to the community, at times relocating from a different district or even state. Additionally, while Elmore’s (1996) and Fullan’s (2002) research and lessons on change may provide new principals with yet another resource, it is important to remember that “the majority of a new principal’s

learning is learning by doing” (Tooms, 2003, p. 530). Lacking this invaluable knowledge and background of the school and the context in which it operates will make careful planning and placing extra emphasis on the initial phase of learning the environment and culture of utmost importance.

Section Three: Discussion on the Research Topic and the Purpose of the Dissertation

For a beginning principal entering a school in Corrective Action, this may be incredibly difficult. Pressures are much more intense and her responsibilities are greater, especially when the principal is new to the school and to her community (Hart, 1991). Charged with the immediate task of transforming her school within a short time frame, while learning as much as she can about the descriptive culture and its cast of characters, the honeymoon period may invariably be shortened if the new leader attempts to fix what is not broken or to “break . . . things that seem to be working well” (King & Blumer, 2000, p. 358). It is therefore important, especially for a first year principal, to have a clear idea of where and how to begin. She will need to plan carefully in order to manage resistance that often accompanies change and the arrival of a new leader (Daresh, 1993; Rooney, 2000) as well as to cope with the pressures of running the school under such intense and demanding circumstances. This planning takes the form of an entry plan, which will serve as a blueprint for her conduct and the steps to be taken once immersed in the daily tasks of running the school (Jentz et al., 2006; Jentz & Murphy, 2005a, 2005b; King & Blumer, 2000; Moynes, 1983).

How she conducts herself during this critical time period will invariably determine how her relationships will evolve and “how effectively . . . [she] will be able to lead in the years to come” (King & Blumer, 2000, p. 360; Blumer, 1999; Jentz et al., 1982; Jentz & Murphy, 2005a, 2005b). This investigator firmly believes what the researchers above have stated. Without establishing a

solid foundation first, a new principal's power is only nominal; her continued authority is weakened; and her ability to bring about successful change is limited.

It is with this in mind that the researcher has chosen to study what demands a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action faces. What does she need to know and be mindful of to be successful? What should her immediate priorities be? How and where should she begin? The purpose of this dissertation is to offer a preliminary investigation of these questions, to develop a greater understanding of some of the challenges and demands that a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action may face, and to identify potential pitfalls that a beginning principal may possibly encounter in a school in Corrective Action. It is the researcher's hope that this study will assist first year principals with a roadmap for a successful entry to school leadership.

Section Four: Literature on Administrator Entry and Studies on First Year Principals

A critical understanding of the following literature is crucial and pertinent to the present study: 1) the theoretical framework of administrator entry; 2) analysis of its stages; and 3) studies and lessons on effective administrator entry. Highlighted in parts one and two are the seminal studies as well as other relevant research that have helped to formulate and shape the theoretical framework of administrator entry and the identification of its particular stages. These bodies of literature serve as a foundation for understanding some of the challenges and demands that first year principals in schools in Corrective Action may encounter.

Introduction to Section Four

Beyond the demands and pressures that any principal faces under Corrective Action, a review of the literature and relevant studies indicate that beginning principals are confronted with many complex and unique challenges. To begin with, Brubaker (1995) asserts that much political

pressure is exerted on new principals “to demonstrate immediate quantitative measures of success” (p. 91). Additionally, Franklin (2005) states that many new principals feel a lack of support and “find themselves questioning how best to tackle the multiple challenges of the job” (p. 1). As a result of these numerous daily tasks, new principals often feel overwhelmed, unprepared, and stressed (Franklin, 2005; Lyons, 1993; Murray, 1981; Rooney, 2000; VonVillas, 1994).

Studies on first year principals further support the findings in the literature above (e.g., Brubaker, 1995; Franklin, 2005; Lyons, 1993; Murray, 1981; Rooney, 2000; VonVillas, 1994).

Morris, Crowson, Hurwitz, & Gehri (1981) in their study of urban principals found that many principals encounter as many as 100 separate events and are involved in 400 daily interactions.

Parkay et al.’s (1992) seminal study of high school principals report that new administrators often experience intense, unrelenting stress as they try to adjust their knowledge of administrative leadership to the real world of practice. While mastering the technical skills needed for survival, new principals must learn how to work with a variety of constituents and wrestle with their inner doubts of self adequacy, all in a face-paced environment that leaves little time for reflection and thoughtfulness (Parkay et al., 1992).

Militello & Behnke (2006) reported that principals who previously held assistant principalships identified several areas for which their previous position had not prepared them. They include “budget management; government regulations/paperwork; facilities management; instructional/curriculum leadership; time management; staff hiring, management, evaluation; and outreach to families/public” (Militello & Behnke, 2006, pp. 14-15). Principals in Militello and Behnke’s (2006) study were also asked to specify areas in which they would have benefited from professional development as a first year principal. Both urban and non-urban Massachusetts

principals reported the following: “legal aspects of the job; distributive leadership (e.g., involving teachers as leadership support); budgeting; curriculum or pedagogy; conflict resolution; and other” (Militello & Behnke, 2006, pp. 15-16). While Militello and Behnke (2006) do not qualify what “other” means, they note a statistically significant difference between one of the responses from urban and non-urban principals. Urban principals were more likely to have noted curriculum or pedagogy as areas in which they would have benefited from professional development as first year principals.

The abovementioned studies only reinforce what the review of literature on first year principals states. First, many new principals often feel overwhelmed, unprepared, and stressed (Franklin, 2005; Murray, 1981; VonVillas, 1994). Second, they face many complex challenges throughout the day (Franklin, 2005). Third, much of the new principal’s learning is on the job (Murray, 1981; Rooney, 2000; Tooms, 2003). As demonstrated in *The Impact of NCLB on the Roles and Responsibilities of Massachusetts Principals* on pages 56 to 58 and in this section, Massachusetts principals today must have the ability to learn new skills and to adapt to a changing environment (Gougeon, 2005; Franklin, 2005; Krajewski, 2008; Lashway, 2003; Mackler, 1996; Murray, 1995; Terry, 2008; Tooms, 2003; VonVillas, 1994).

Part One of Section Four: Theoretical Framework of Administrator Entry

To be as prepared as possible for the nuances and the uncertainties that accompany a new principal’s first job, it is important first of all to define what principal entry is. A useful approach to understanding the theoretical frame of administrator entry is derived from Merton’s (1968) socialization theory, which are the processes or the knowledge, skills, and values acquired by an individual to perform a social role effectively. Many studies on first year principals (e.g., Alvy, 1983; Daresh, 1986a, 1986b, 1993; Duke, 1987; Duke et al., 1984; Greenfield, 1977a, 1977b,

1985a, 1985b; Hart, 1987, 1991; Parkay et al., 1992; Parkay & Hall, 1992; Van Maanen, 1978; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Weindling & Earley, 1987) have used Merton's theoretical framework to develop a greater understanding of principal entry. In the aforementioned studies, the socialization of principals encompasses three forms: 1) anticipatory; 2) professional; and 3) organizational.

Anticipatory Socialization

To begin with, anticipatory socialization is the learning of the rights, the norms, and the behaviors appropriate to a social status not yet achieved by the individuals concerned. In essence, the individuals bring their experiences to a situation that affect the manner, in which they "will interpret and make use of new information" (Zeichner & Gore, 1989, p. 13). Daresh and Playko (1992) in their study of first year principals identify anticipatory socialization as "ordinarily something that has taken place long before the individual is ready to assume a new professional role" (p. 150). For a first year principal, anticipatory socialization usually occurs years before the principal accepts her job. This stage of principal socialization involves the principal's preconceived notions about her role that are based from her experiences as a teacher (Daresh & Playko, 1992).

Professional Socialization

The (would be) principal then moves to the next stage, professional socialization, which is defined as the "processes through which one becomes a member of a profession and, over time, develops an identity with that profession" (Parkay et al., 1992, p. 45). This period "encompasses learning about the field of administration and how school administrators . . . make sense of the world" (Duke, 1988, p. 22). It includes activities, such as "understanding the ways by which the effectiveness of schools can be judged; learning the ethics and laws governing managerial

behavior; [and] recognizing where professional norms and organizational norms may conflict” (Duke, 1988, p. 22). This form of socialization usually occurs in formal courses and in professional preparation programs for aspiring principals, and in their first years of a new job (Duke, 1987; Duke et al., 1984; Hart, 1987, 1993; Parkay et al., 1992; Parkay & Hall, 1992).

Organizational Socialization

The final stage, organizational socialization, refers to “the process by which one is taught and learns ‘the ropes’ of a particular organizational role” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 211) within a specific work environment. This type of socialization is more subtle and learned through a series of interactive processes between the individual and its organization (Duke, 1988). Once on the job, the new principal learns the specific knowledge, values, and behaviors required to perform that role and that will provide her with legitimacy and validation in a given setting (Duke, 1988; Hart, 1991; Merton, 1968; Morford, 2002).

While the abovementioned researchers derive their understanding of principal socialization from Merton’s (1968) socialization theory, for some of these researchers the exact boundaries between professional and organizational socialization remain a point of debate and interpretation. For example, Morford (2002) saw three distinct periods of principal socialization. Anticipatory socialization for new principals began years before the new principals assumed their first job, as in their experiences as teachers. Once the new principals entered their administrative programs, the professional socialization of new principals began and lasted until the end of their training or preparation programs. Organizational socialization began as soon as the new principals “move[d] into employment positions” (Morford, 2002, p. 3).

Duke (1987) and Duke et al., (1984), Parkay et al. (1982), Parkay and Hall (1992), and Hart (1993) do not have as distinct the boundaries between the different phases of principal

socialization as in Morford's (2002) research. For example, Duke (1987) and Duke et al. do not have as clear a line between anticipatory and professional socialization as in Morford (2002). In Duke et al., the authors found that principals perceived all their professional experiences, including those as teachers, as part of their overall socialization as principals. Both the formal type of learning as in the administrative preparation programs for principal candidates and the informal types of learning, such as "learning on the job" are included as the necessary skill sets for principal socialization (Duke et al., 1984). These aspects are not present in Morford's (2002) model of principal socialization.

Morford (2002) further describes a distinct difference between the professional and organizational socialization of new principals. In her model, organizational socialization of first year principals begins when new principals start their employment. In Duke et al. (1984), the principals view their experiences as teachers as part of their overall socialization. Hence, the professional socialization of new principals began with anticipatory socialization, moved through entry in the principalship, and concluded with a period of metamorphosis. According to Duke et al. this period usually occurred at the end of the principals' first year: most new principals no longer felt like rookies. However, Duke et al. also concluded that the induction period can be of varying length.

Similar to Duke (1987) and Duke et al. (1984), Parkay et al. (1992) and Parkay and Hall (1992) saw the importance of both learning from coursework and the skills acquired on the job. However, Parkay et al. believe that the professional socialization of new principals extends beyond the completion of a new principal's first year and possibly into the first couple of years of the job.

Hart (1993) contends that first year principals experience “double socialization . . . - professional socialization to school administrators and organizational socialization to their immediate work setting” (p. 12). Similar to Van Maanen (1976, 1977a, 1977b) new principals “must break into a new social group and a new profession simultaneously” (Hart, 1993, p. 12). Hart (1991, 1993) is quick to note that this double socialization experience occurs only for first-time principals. Seasoned principals engage in a different type of learning process than first-time principals. With a greater understanding of what the job entails, experienced principals are more focused on “learning the ropes” (i.e., organizational socialization) than on learning both the skill sets (i.e., professional socialization) and “the social role that will buy them access to legitimacy and validation in a given setting” (Hart, 1994, p. 4), i.e., organizational socialization.

Hart (1991) argues that professional and organizational socialization differ only in “kind and substance” (p. 452). While Hart contends that professional socialization and organizational socialization “occur simultaneously in the early induction period, . . . organizational socialization in subsequent assignments may instill values and norms that differ markedly from those learned during professional socialization” (p. 452). Similar to Duke (1987) and Schein (1968, 1985), Hart (1991) found that “organizational socialization quickly overpowers professional socialization if the two conflict” (p. 452). Hart (1991) states:

The saliency, immediacy, and power of the work context hold sway over education and training. Superiors control evaluation criteria and the distribution of rewards. Colleagues control affiliation and sociality. Demands of the work control the task performed and their importance. (p. 452)

It is evident from the abovementioned research that the exact boundaries between professional and organizational socialization remain an important point of contention and much

discussion among researchers in this field. While this is an interesting aspect of principal socialization, the pursuit of the present dissertation lies in defining what constitutes as a successful entry for a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action. Therefore, it is important to have a deep understanding of what first year principals encounter.

As referenced in previous sections of this dissertation, especially in *Introduction to Section Four* on pages 72 to 73, it appears that many first year principals experience stress from not only the amount of learning required for the job, but also “from the need for quick assimilation into a new culture” (Lashway, 2003, p. 2). Additionally, because every school is a unique organization with its “values, behavioral norms and cast of characters” (King & Blumer, 2000, p. 357), new principals have yet another responsibility of learning about the school culture and “quickly discerning the unwritten rules and identifying the real movers and shakers” (Lashway, 2003, p. 2). This process of learning is pivotal and allows new principals to become socialized in their new roles and to go from “stranger” to “insider,” i.e., organizational socialization (Hart, 1993). As Hart (1993) contends, first-time principals experience double socialization: “they must break into a new social group and a new profession simultaneously” (p. 12). It is with this mind that this next section focuses on studies pertaining to both the professional and organizational socialization of beginning principals.

Empirical Studies on Professional and Organizational Socialization of First Year Principals

Notable studies that have explored the socialization of principals in their formal training (professional socialization), and as new principals in their first years of administrators (professional socialization and organizational socialization) include research from Duke (1987) and Duke et al. (1984); Greenfield (1977a, 1977b, 1985a, 1985b); and Weindling and Earley (1987).

Duke, Duke et al., and Further Relevant Studies

In a series of seminal studies, Duke et al. (1984) studied both novice and veteran principals in their first principalships. They found that all principals perceived their past experiences as teachers as the beginning of their professional socialization period and identified the end of this process after the completion of their first years as principals. While the induction period varied for different participants, the majority of the principals no longer felt like “rookies” at the end of their first years.

Duke (1987) and Duke et al. (1984) further reported that the socialization experiences of the novice principals were intense, short, and informal. Only four of the 45 principals involved in this study had received any formal orientation by employing districts. Many of the principals perceived their first year experiences as more invaluable to their “survival” than their training in their formal courses and preparation programs. Further, principals’ expectations of their first principalships and what they actually experienced were different. Feelings of unpreparedness, loneliness, and anxiety due to time constraints made for a challenging first year for these novice principals.

Other studies support the findings of Duke (1987) and Duke et al. (1984). Daresh (1986a, 1986b, 1993) in his studies on first year principals reported that “novice principals experience a profound sense of isolation from peers as they move into their roles; . . . often lack confidence, even when they possess great competence to do their jobs; . . . and typically describe their new roles as times filled with anxiety, frustration, and self-doubt” (Daresh, 1993, p. 3).

Further, Alvy (1983), in his research of 70 Montanan elementary and secondary principals completing their first or second years, found that “principalship socialization involved

manipulation of and alienation from the faculty, patience and flexibility concerning staff and community opinions, time constraints, and the development of a broader perspective” (ii).

Greenfield and Further Relevant Studies

Greenfield (1977a, 1977b, 1985a, 1985b) also investigated the socialization processes of principals. In his earlier studies (1977a, 1977b), he examined the socialization processes of fourteen public school teachers (i.e., anticipatory socialization) and the outcomes of their becoming school administrators (i.e., situational adjustment). Similar to Merton’s (1968) definition of organizational socialization, situational adjustment is a process whereby individuals assume the characteristics required by the situation in which they participate (Greenfield, 1977a, 1977b). According to Greenfield (1977b), as the principal moves through a variety of social situations, the principal “learns the requirements of continuing in the situation, and of being successful in it” (p. 171). In essence, the new principal is “learning the ropes” (organizational socialization).

Greenfield (1985b) further reported that socialization to administration is individualized, informal, and random, similar to the findings of Duke (1987) and Duke et al. (1984). In examining the socialization process of novice principals, Greenfield (1985b) found that it occurs over a time frame, and involves “both divestiture and investiture processes” (p. 9). “As the ‘teacher’ self is gradually shed . . . , the ‘administrator’ self evolves” (Greenfield, 1985b, p. 16). This process may take years to unfold.

In addition, Greenfield (1985a) reported that the professional socialization of beginning principals served two primary roles: moral socialization and technical socialization. While moral socialization outcomes refer to “the attitudes, values, and belief required for adequate performance in the role, technical socialization outcomes refer to knowledge and behavior

reflecting technical, conceptual, and social skills and activities associated with role enactment” (Greenfield, 1985a, p. 100). Hence, both forms of socialization are necessary and vital to ensure that the novice principals acquire the knowledge, skills, and values needed to perform their roles successfully (Greenfield, 1985a).

In another facet of this study, Greenfield (1985a) noted the importance of novice administrators learning about the existing school culture and norms in their schools. He (1985a) suggested that beginning administrators adopt a “custodial” response rather than an “innovative” response to avoid “unduly violat[ing] the current school culture and existing norms” (p. 111). Four dimensions of the new administrator’s work exert a critical influence on the socialization process: relationships with teachers, peers, and superiors; community support; “establish[ed] . . . routines associated with organizational stability; and the maintenance of smooth day-to-day school operations” (Greenfield, 1985a, p. 44). “Which of these is viewed as most problematic by the individual is a function of the degree of correspondence between the role learning which occurs during candidacy and characteristics of the work context which the rookie principal or assistant principal encounters” (Greenfield, 1985a, p. 42).

Hence, if the first year principal is to succeed in changing aspects of a social or cultural system, then she “must be well acquainted with the system, knowledgeable but not blinded by unexamined underlying assumption and values” (Greenfield, 1985a, p. 111). Furthermore, to act on the system from within the system, the first year principal must first gain “access to and acceptance among those who control participation in the system” (Greenfield, 1985a, p. 111).

This finding is similar to those of Hart’s (1991) socialization research on beginning principals. While professional and organizational socialization occurs simultaneously in the early induction period of novice principals, organizational socialization in “subsequent assignments

may instill values and norms that differ markedly from those learned during professional socialization” (Hart, 1991, p. 452). If the two conflict, organizational socialization quickly prevails over professional socialization (Duke, 1987; Hart, 1991; Schein, 1968, 1985). New principals soon realize that to be successful in their principalships, they must earn their credibility: they must learn their social roles that will win them legitimacy and validation in their particular settings (Hart, 1994; Merton, 1968).

Weindling and Earley and Further Relevant Studies

Weindling and Earley’s (1987) pioneering national study of the secondary headship (principalship) in England, Wales, and Scotland echoed very similar findings as those concluded in aforementioned research. Three stages of data collection were involved in this massive research on first year headteachers (principals).

Beginning in 1982, the first stage of research involved interviewing 188 headteachers. After three months in the job, a cohort of 47 heads were selected and interviewed, of which 16 were chosen for detailed case studies over their first years of headship. In these case studies, three separate visits were made to each school. Interviews were conducted “with the heads, each of the senior management team, a cross-section of teacher, the chair of governors, and a senior LEA advisor” (Weindling, 2000, p. 7). In total, 300 interviews were conducted to gather data for the first stage of this massive project.

In 1988 the second phase of research was launched, and the original 16 heads were re-interviewed, and the 47 heads were surveyed again, now after five to six years in their jobs.

In 1993, the third phase was initiated. One hundred heads were surveyed who were still in their original positions as headteachers in their same schools after ten to eleven years. The 100 heads were from the original sample of 188.

Findings from stage one of the research, which included data from a national survey and case studies showed that the cohort of new heads shared similar experiences, such as 1) dealing with difficulties resulting from the style and practice of the former head; 2) learning the technical skills to run the school; 3) communicating and consulting with staff effectively; 4) managing incompetent staff; 5) improving low staff morale as well as school-community relations; and 6) establishing the role and identity as the new head (Weindling & Earley, 1987). New heads also experienced loneliness and isolation in the job, as well as feelings of unpreparedness when asked to initiate new curriculum changes mandated by their department of education.

Weindling and Earley's (1987) research further support the findings of Duke (1987), Duke et al. (1984), and Greenfield (1985b). Weindling and Earley (1987) found that socialization experiences by first year principals are usually informal, tense, and unplanned, rather than designed. As reported in the research of in Duke et al., feelings of unpreparedness, loneliness, and stress due to time constraints were also present in the study of Weindling and Earley (1987).

In addition, based on their findings from parts two and three of their comprehensive research, Weindling and Earley (1987) designed a model of headship entry identifying six stages.

In *Stage 0* or the *Preparation Prior to Headship*, professional socialization for new heads occurred. Similar to the findings of Duke (1987), Duke et al. (1987), and Hart (1991), professional socialization occurred in both formal settings as in university courses and in informal environments, such as on the job. Weindling and Early (1987) further noted that throughout their careers, new heads developed a conception of their headship.

Stage 1 or *Entry and Encounter* then occurred during the first two months of their employments. Weindling and Earley (1987) noted that the first few days and weeks were crucial

to the success of the new headteacher's entry. During this time, new heads should take the time to understand the culture, the issues, the people, and the complexities of their situations.

Stage 2 or *Taking Hold* lasted between the first three to twelve months of the new headship's job. The new heads introduced a number of organizational changes, and developed a deeper understanding of their schools. They prioritized the existing issues and constructed plans of actions. Known as the "honeymoon period," the staff was more lenient and open to change. The length of the honeymoon period varied for new heads, from about a term to a year, and often ended suddenly by a negative staff reaction to an action from the new head.

After a year of learning, Weindling and Earley (1987) noticed that most heads felt more confident and secure as leaders. In *Stage 3* or *Reshaping*, new heads developed a greater understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their staff, while conversely the staff learned about their heads' strengths and weaknesses. Expectations for both the new head and staff were more realistic and clearer. *Stage 3* was *the period of major change*.

In *Stage 4* or *Refinement* or the third or fourth year of their headships, many of the structural changes were implemented. Further curriculum changes were initiated, and a number of refinements were made.

Approximately lasting five to seven years, in *Consolidation* or *Stage 5*, the heads introduced most of the planned changes.

The heads suggested that "about seven years in one school was sufficient to see through a cohort of pupils and to have initiated most of [their] changes" (Weindling, 2000, p. 13).

Identified as *Stage 6* or *Plateau*, this period lasted approximately eight years and onwards.

Motivating heads to remain in one school until the end of their career was a potential problem for some heads in this time period. However, it was reported that most heads enjoyed their work.

As a caveat, Weindling and Earley (1987) noted that the time periods linked to each stage must be taken as approximations as different heads move at different speeds.

In conclusion, Weindling and Earley's (1987) model offers a means for helping beginning administrators understand the various stages of headship entry and is often used as a point of reference when discussing the theoretical framework of principal entry.

Part Two of Section Four: Stages of Administrator Entry

Building on the seminal study of Weindling and Earley (1987), Parkay et al. (1992) and Parkay and Hall (1992) surveyed 113 first-time high school principals. They documented and analyzed the professional socialization of 12 novice high school principals, following them for a period of three years after their appointments to their principalships. They developed a five stage developmental model to describe the career patterns of these new principals.

In Stage 1, *survival*, the new principal enters the school environment as the leader and experiences a reality shock “of beginning leadership and has concern with ‘sorting it out’ ” (Parkay et al., 1992, p. 56; Van Maanen, 1978). She feels overwhelmed, and personal concerns and professional insecurity affect her thoughts and behaviors. (Alvy, 1983; Daresh, 1986a, 1986b, 1993; Duke, 1987; Duke et al., 1984; Greenfield, 1985b).

The principal's concerns for survival are less intense in Stage 2, *control*. Her primary goal is to set priorities and to manage the insatiable demands of her job. Van Maanen (1977a) viewed this stage as “normalizing the setting.” Similar to the phase that Weindling and Earley (1987) identified as *taking hold*, the principal is “developing an understanding of what to do within the organization and how to do it” (Parkay et al., 1992, p. 57). Her “behaviors are ‘legitimated’ by positional power rather than personal power” (Parkay et al., 1992, p. 57). She still has to learn

the social role that will buy her access to credibility and validation as the leader of her school (Hart, 1994).

Her frustrations are mitigated in Stage 3, *stability*, as she begins to develop a greater understanding of how to manage her school effectively and efficiently. In this stage, the principal takes on a “custodial orientation to the new role . . . and assume[s] a caretaker response to the responsibilities, missions, and activities associated with that role” (Greenfield, 1985a, p. 110). Similar to Weindling and Earley’s (1987) *reshaping* and *refinement*, “difficulties related to facilitating change are accepted, [and the] individual has achieved ‘veteran’ status” (Parkay et al., 1992, p. 56).

Stage 4, *educational leadership*, is the first phase in which maintaining a strong vision becomes essential. Whereas the first three stages are primarily focused on defending her character and “compel[s] the leader to respond to threats to leadership by struggling, controlling, or developing compromising strategies, the Stage 4 leaders expects long-term success for change strategies” (Parkay et al., 1992, p. 58). Primarily focused on enhancing the curriculum and instruction of the school, the principal’s legitimacy comes from personal power rather than positional authority. External sources, such as faculty, district personnel, and other school community members recognize the principal’s strong leadership qualities. It is at this stage that she, the principal, may decide to advance her career. Similar to Weindling and Earley’s (1987) *consolidation*, she has introduced most of her planned changes.

In Stage 5, *professional actualization*, “confirmation comes from within” (Parkay et al., 1992, p. 56). The leader brings out the best in her staff, and faculty members work collegially and collaboratively to improve the school because they have a shared vision. As in Weindling and Earley’s (1987) *plateau*, real changes are seen. In essence, the leader has created a school culture

that is characterized by empowerment, growth, and authenticity (Parkay et al., 1992). It is this stage that the principal may at last see the fruition of her hard work and efforts.

Underlying their five stage developmental model were four basic assumptions. In their influential research, Parkay et al. (1992) and Parkay and Hall (1992) found the following

First, principals begin at different stages of development. Not all beginning principals begin at Stage 1. Second, principals move through the stages of professional socialization at different rates. Third, no single factor determines a principal's stage of development. Personal characteristics as well as situational or contextual variables can play a significant influence on the principal's stage of development. Fourth, the effectiveness of the former principal can have an impact on the professional socialization of the new principal. Principals may operate at more than one stage simultaneously, and the stages are the predominant orientation of the principal.

Parkay et al. (1992) and Parkay and Hall (1992) later found two additional patterns by which the professional socialization of the 12 principals was characterized. First, they found that all 12 principals reported during their third year that "they entered the principalship with unrealistic expectations regarding the process of change facilitation" (Parkay et al., 1992, p. 61). Several commented on having a vision for their schools that was impossible, if not extremely difficult, to bring into being.

Second, their study revealed that "a principal's eventual level of professional socialization is strongly indicated by the end of [her] first year" (Parkay et al., 1992, p. 61). Although change is a slow process (Fullan 1999, 2003) and requires considerable time and effort for this approach to occur (King & Blumer, 2000), the researchers found that how a principal conducted herself during her first year would foreshadow her eventual level of effectiveness by the end of her third year.

While Parkay et al. (1992) and Parkay and Hall (1992) derived a five stage model to describe the entry of new principals, Hart (1993) also “identif[ied] periods of learning and uncertainty, gradual adjustment during which outcomes (custodial or organizational change) begin to emerge, and stabilization” (pp. 28-29). Three major periods of organizational socialization in the principal’s entry period were identified.

In the initial arrival stage, *encounter, anticipation, or confrontation*, the principal is learning a great deal. She must confront and accept the reality of the school culture and of the new relationships with her superiors. The process is also called sense making: it is how the new principal makes sense of the situation (Louis, 1980). Success depends on two measures: “the extent to which the expectations of the new member and the organization are realistic and the degree to which the newcomer is well-matched with . . . her new role. It thus includes professional socialization” (Hart, 1991, p. 459).

This anticipation of change brings with it problems, conflict, and opportunities (Cosgrove, 1986; Ogawa, 1991). During this arrival stage, Cosgrove (1986) hypothesizes that the anticipation of change is so strong that if new principals allow this time to pass, teachers will resent later attempts to make serious changes. Daresh (1993) in a similar study found that “when the principal changes, whole new patterns of behavior on the part of teachers must be discovered” (p. 12).

Stage 2: Adjustment, Accommodation, Clarity involves the new principal fitting in. The new principal “must reach accommodation with the work role, the people with whom . . . she interacts, and the new school culture” (Hart, 1991, p. 459). During this period, the beginning principal seeks clarity of her role and assesses the tasks to be accomplished. Interpersonal relationships with school community members (i.e., parents, students, staff, principals, and

central administration) emerge. The new principal learns to cope with resistance to change from established members of her school as well as to deal with feelings of ambiguity.

In *Stage 2*, studies on new principals indicate that their major source of anxiety is personal performance. Principals wonder whether their contributions will be valued by their teachers and whether they will enjoy their work. Lyons (1993) in his study on new principals found that respondents' greatest frustrations were related to "role adjustment, amount of authority, tremendous amount of responsibility, and time management; and their greatest challenges were delegating responsibility, becoming familiar with school operations, becoming familiar with the role, and becoming familiar with the school" (p. 199). As further noted in the works of Alvy (1983), Daresh (1986a, 1986b, 1993), Duke (1987), Duke et al. (1984), Greenfield, (1985b), and Weindling and Earley (1987), these feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and pressures due to time constraints appear to be common experiences among first year principals.

Then, in *Stage 3 Stabilization*, stable patterns begin to emerge from socialization. During this period, the new principal learns how "her work fits into the organization (and into life outside of work) and resolves the conflicts that arise within the work itself" (Hart, 1991, p. 460). New interpersonal relationships develop. At this stage, the new principal has transformed her identity. She has learned which behaviors meet the expectations of her staff and superiors. In essence, the new principal is now accepted as the school leader by her staff and her superiors. While for seasoned principals this transformation may be accomplished within two years, for a first time principal, a much longer time frame is required (Hart, 1993).

Part Three of Section Four: Studies and Lessons on Effective Administrator Entry

Works by Van Maanen (1977a, 1977b), Jentz et al. (1992), and King and Blumer (2000) also remind beginning principals to be attentive to the "descriptive culture" before shaping the

“prescriptive culture.” They must take the time to discover how to fit into the existing group (i.e., organizational socialization), while at the same time learn how to “remain different and distinct . . . [in order] to contribute creatively to the growth and development of the school” (Hart, 1993, p. 3), which as Hart (1993) identifies is the essence of leadership succession. According to Van Maanen (1977a, 1977b), beginning principals should be mindful of the school culture; aware of the different stages in the beginning principal’s career; and cognizant of the ups and downs of leadership to have a successful entry. Jentz et al. (1982) and King and Blumer (2000) further remind first year principals that a successful entry takes time and involves a great deal of learning. Observing the culture; learning about “the attitudes and norms of the community and its people” (Jentz et al., 1982, p. 17); and understanding what school members think and how they feel are important aspects to creating a successful entry for any beginning principal.

Jentz et al. (1982) use the case study of Principal Kelleher to expand on the importance of acknowledging and understanding existing cultural norms when beginning a principalship. In his personal account, former Superintendent Paul Kelleher recalls the difficulties of his first year principalship and the school board wanting to fire him in his second year because of “quickly making changes and solving problems without enough knowledge of how . . . [the] new environment works” (Jentz. et al., 1982, p. 24). Here, King and Blumer (2000) point out to new principals, especially first year principals, that it would be wise to avoid trying to “fix things that are not broken and breaking things that seem to be working well” (p. 357). New principals should further “define the problem in the context of the school’s values . . . [and] provide the faculty with an opportunity to resolve” (King & Blumer, 2000, p. 357) the issue rather than imposing their own will and using their positional power.

Hence, new principals should take the time to study their new schools and their cultures (Jentz et al., 1982; King & Blumer, 2000). In this process of learning about the new school, its culture, and cast of characters, the new principal will be able to tap into the dreams and hopes of community members, and to bring about changes based on the community's belief systems. In essence, while this process will reinforce and celebrate certain norms, it will also "establish new ones that better serve the school[s] . . . mission" (King & Blumer, 2000, p. 358). In doing so, the new principal has learned how to fit into and work with the existing culture (i.e., organizational socialization) to move the school closer to its espoused values and vision. Her behaviors, which are consistent with her core values, will establish trust among her staff members; influence the culture of the school system; legitimize her position and power; and validate her ability to be an effective leader for years to come (i.e., leadership succession) (Hart, 1993). Therefore, "what . . . [new principals] do and how they conduct themselves during the critical entry or 'honeymoon' phase sets the stage for how their relationships will evolve and how effectively they will be able to lead in the years to come" (King & Blumer, 2000, p. 360).

As a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action, the researcher is confronted with many of the abovementioned challenges. She is personally committed to the success of her school and interested in learning how to have a successful entry. As demonstrated in section four having a successful beginning will set the tone and lay the groundwork for building authentic relationships with community members (i.e., parents, students, teachers, administrators, and other community members); for developing trust and credibility with school members; and for legitimating her role as the leader and principal of the school. Because of the complexities of the job today and its various demands, it is of utmost importance that the researcher identify what dynamics define a successful entry for a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action if

she is to be a successful leader, who will be effective for years to come. Therefore, the research question driving this study is:

What factors do middle school teachers perceive as vital for creating a successful entry for a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action?

It is important to note that while the perceptions of students, parents, administrators, and community members are just as vital and necessary in learning how to create a successful entry, the scope of this research focuses on the teacher's perspective as a point of reference.

Conclusion

Today, the ability of principals to adapt to the new norms and expectations is of critical importance. While there has been increasing knowledge about the work life and demands of first year principals (e.g., Alvy, 1983; Daresh, 1986a, 1986b, 1993; Duke, 1987; Duke et al., 1984; Greenfield, 1985a, 1985b; Hart 1987; Parkay et al., 1992; Parkay & Hall, 1992; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), the aforementioned research (as presented in chapter two and to the best of the researcher's knowledge) does not focus on the unique needs and conditions that beginning principals face in *schools in Corrective Action*. In particular, all of these influential studies on beginning principals occurred before the No Child Left Behind Act was implemented in 2001.

Under MERA and NCLB, the role of the Massachusetts principal has become increasingly complex and demanding, adding a host of new challenges to a job that was never easy by any account. The array of leadership skills and the arduous tasks of the principal's job are only exacerbated and more demanding when working in a school in Corrective Action. MERA imposes a list of stipulations and guidelines that principals must abide. Added to this dimension is the steep learning curve required of first year principals, who experience double socialization (Hart, 1993). Unlike seasoned principals, who have accumulated knowledge helpful to their

particular job settings from previous work, first-time principals must learn the skills required to perform the job effectively, while at the same time mastering the social roles that will gain them access to legitimacy and validation in their given settings (Hart, 1993; Merton, 1968). As a result of task overload and the learning required of the job, the review of literature (e.g., Brubaker, 1995; Franklin, 2005; Murray, 1981; VonVillas, 1994) and empirical research (e.g., Alvy, 1983; Daresh, 1986a, 1986b, 1993; Duke, 1987; Duke et al., 1984; Greenfield 1985b; Weindling & Earley, 1987) indicates that new principals often feel unprepared, overwhelmed, and extremely stressed.

Disoriented, but under incredible pressure to fix all the problems of the school, new principals often “reflectively hide their confusion and try to appear decisive by acting quickly” (Jentz & Murphy, 2005b, p. 736). In doing so, they often stumble into unavoidable and dangerous pitfalls (Franklin, 2005; Morford, 2002; Rooney, 2000; Tooms, 2003). Therefore, to ensure a good beginning, the research in chapter two asserts that any principal, especially first-time principals, must develop a process of learning. This course of action will allow the new principal to be socialized into the school’s social group and achieve legitimacy by teachers, parents, and her superiors so that she can have a significant impact on the actions taken by others (Hart, 1994).

What this approach will entail and how it will look like in a Massachusetts middle school in Corrective Action remain to be seen as the purpose of this dissertation is to explore this topic. Findings from this case study will provide new principals with information as to what teachers perceive as most vital to a successful entry. In essence, it serves as a road map of where and how to begin. The researcher hopes that the experiences and lessons learned from her experiences as documented in this work will assist beginning principals who are faced with similar challenges to have the keys to entry that will lead to success in their principalships.

CHAPTER 3: DESIGN OF RESEARCH

Foreward

The purpose of this study is to illuminate the key factors that contribute to a successful entry for a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action as perceived by teachers. To achieve this goal requires not only an understanding of the existing literature and research as reviewed in chapter two but also knowledge of pertinent research design methods. Therefore, in this chapter the methodology and the rationale for the proposed research are articulated. Consisting of nine sections, chapter three is organized as follows:

Section one restates the research question.

Section two is comprised of three parts. Part one defines the research design, including the research method employed and the rationale for choosing this methodology. Part two provides a detailed description of the study's setting, as well as a historical analysis of the setting, which is pertinent to this case study. Part three describes the population, the unit of analysis, the sample, the selection of participants, and ethical considerations of the study.

Section three notes the findings from two pilot studies and the resulting modifications made to the study.

Section four accounts for the instruments used for the study.

Section five articulates the role of the researcher.

Section six consists describes the data collection procedures and presents the timeline of when data were collected.

Section seven describes the strategies for data analysis and interpretation based on the new data collection procedures.

Section eight then addresses the validity, reliability, and generalizability of this study.

Section nine identifies the frameworks for discussing the findings in chapter four.

Chapter three ends with a conclusion, providing a brief overall summary of the topics addressed above.

Section One: Research Question

To help frame the rationale for the research design, the research question is:

What factors do middle school teachers perceive as vital for creating a successful entry for a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action?

Section Two: Research Design

Part One of Section Two: Research Method and Rationale for Using Qualitative Research

Research studies that construct meaning and explore the quality of activities, materials, relationships, or situations are often referred to as qualitative research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Merriam, 1998). Patton (1995) writes:

[Qualitative research] . . . is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting – what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting - and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting. (p. 1)

While five types of qualitative research are commonly used in educational studies (i.e., basic, case study, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology), all qualitative inquiries contain several characteristics, although not necessarily equal in strength (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Merriam, 1998).

First, qualitative research is exploratory in nature and uses the natural setting as the primary source of data. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 2003, 2007, Frankel & Wallen, 2006; Merriam, 1998). Qualitative researchers often enter a particular setting of interest to observe and

collect data in order to develop a greater understanding of meaning; that is, how people construct their worlds and define their experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1998). As a result, qualitative researchers often spend a considerable amount of time in particular settings, developing “a level of detail about the individual[s] or [the] place” (Creswell, 2003, p. 181).

The researcher spent an enormous amount of time observing, studying, and learning about her school and its teachers. As the principal of HMS, she had the wonderful opportunity to work closely with her teachers. Further, this study allowed her to gain a deeper understanding of what her teachers perceived as essential for a successful beginning.

Second, qualitative research involves a deep introspection and acknowledgement of the researcher’s biases, values, and interests (Bodgen & Biklen, 1998; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Because interpretation of data is based and filtered through the researcher’s own personal biography (Bodgen & Biklen, 1998; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Rossman & Rallis, 2003), “the personal-self becomes inseparable from the researcher-self” (Creswell, 2003, p. 182). This, however, is not perceived as a weakness, rather as a strength in qualitative research (Merriam et al., 2002; Patton, 2002). Qualitative studies recognize that “values are an integral part of the research process . . . [and that] . . . facts and values are inextricably intertwined” (Frankel & Wallen, 2006, p. 433).

As such, the researcher documented her emotions and reactions to events. She recorded her impressions and insights of what she saw, heard, and felt in her journal entries. She also defined her role as the researcher and what she had to be considerate of in her study.

Third, qualitative research is multifaceted, on-going, and simultaneous (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Patton, 2002). Although qualitative research is primarily inductive as meaning is constructed based on the collection and examination of data (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1998), both inductive

and deductive reasoning may be involved in qualitative research (Patton, 2002). The thinking process can involve “a cycling back and forth from data collection and analysis to problem reformulation and back” (Creswell, 2003, p. 183). Bogdan and Bilken (1998) note that a hypothesis is not usually formulated beforehand in qualitative research; instead, the hypothesis emerges as the study progresses.

During the data analyses, several patterns, themes, and/or categories emerged and were established through inductive reasoning based on the researcher's on-going collection, examination, and compilation of data from interview transcripts, field notes, and documents. Once these themes were formulated, deduction reasoning was used to test and affirm the authenticity and appropriateness of the inductive analysis, as well as to explain any deviated cases or data that had not aligned with the categories established (Patton, 2002).

Finally, the product from qualitative research, including the collected data and the research's findings, are richly descriptive (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Merriam et al., 2003). Qualitative researchers do not attempt to reduce data collection and/or findings to numerical symbols; rather, they seek to portray what has been “observed and recorded in all of its richness” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; p. 431). As such, data collection often involves interviews, observations, and documents including personal comments, diaries, memos, official records, and thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) along with field notes and interview transcripts (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). As Denzin (1994) states, “[A]n event or process can neither be interpreted nor understood until it has been well described” (p. 505). In this study, multiple methods were used to gather data (i.e., teacher responses from the on-line survey, the researcher's journal entries and field notes, as well as school documents. The researcher's field notes further contained thick descriptions. In

presenting the data and analyses, quotes were used from teacher responses, field notes, and documents, which provided for a descriptive narrative and end product.

In summary, qualitative research was chosen as most fitting because the present study is exploratory in nature and is characterized by the search for understanding. Because qualitative research contains assumptions (Creswell, 2003), the researcher examined not only her personal biases but also her role as the researcher, noting that her level of participation either facilitated or hindered the data collection (Creswell, 2003; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The data analysis was on-going and emergent throughout the investigation, and both inductive and deductive reasoning were used. Finally, the product was richly descriptive.

Case Studies and Single-Case Study Approach

The case study approach, and in particular, the single-case study methodology was chosen as most suitable for this study.

Merriam (1998) writes:

A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context, rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research. Case studies are differentiated from other types of qualitative research in that they are intensive descriptions and analyses of a *single unit* or *bounded system*” (p. 19).

The phenomenon of study must be intrinsically bounded in order for it to be defined as a case (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 2007). Yin (2003) defines a case as the *unit of analysis*, which is specified in the researcher’s primary research question.

This case study, which examined the relationship between a first year principal and her teachers, was “bounded” by time (i.e., the first couple of months of the principal's entry) and place (i.e., situated in HMS). Specifically, the researcher explored the interactions between a first year principal and her teachers during the first couple of months upon her entry in a particular middle school in Corrective Action.

Case study methodology is most favorable “when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated” (Yin, 2003, p. 7).

This study did not attempt to control or alter the teachers’ behavior; instead, the researcher recorded her personal observations and feelings; conducted interviews with teachers; and analyzed documents. This was done to gain a greater understanding as to what keys to entry would lead to success in the principalship, particularly, for principals in schools in Corrective Action.

Additionally, “case study [research] is preferable when examining contemporary events” (Yin, 2003, p. 7) and most favorable for gaining insight into a new phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). Because case study methodology seeks to develop a greater understanding of a particular phenomenon, process rather than product, and discovery instead of confirmation are the key goals for case study methodology (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003).

In this age of standards and accountability, the role of the principal has changed (Houle, 2006). As documented in chapter two, very few studies, if any, focus on the unique demands and conditions that beginning principals face in schools in Corrective Action. Most studies on beginning principals occurred before NCLB was implemented in 2001. The present study investigated this new phenomenon by examining the unique needs and situations that a beginning principal encountered while working in a school in Corrective Action. Findings from

this case study will hopefully provide beginning principals with relevant information on how to cope effectively with these new challenges.

Finally, case studies can involve either a single-case or a multiple-case design when addressing the research question (Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) asserts that the single-case approach is “eminently justifiable under the following conditions – when the case represents (a) a critical test of existing theory, (b) a rare or unique circumstance, or (c) a representative or typical case or when the case serves a (d) revelatory or (e) longitudinal purpose” (pp. 42-43).

Working in a school in Corrective Action, the researcher had the wonderful and rare opportunity to delve deeply into and analyze the inner workings and developments of a school, as well as to observe and gather teacher perceptions and their expectations of her as their first year principal. The chance to observe and analyze this phenomenon made this case revelatory, and most appropriate for using a single-case study approach (Yin, 2003).

As referenced in chapter two and to the best of the researcher's knowledge, most of the studies on beginning principals occurred before NCLB was implemented. Therefore, findings from this case study will not only add to the existing literature on principal socialization but also bring a greater awareness of the work life and demands of a first year principal working in a school in Corrective Action. Because this case was both revelatory and unique, the single-case approach was chosen as the best design method for this study.

Single-case studies are delineated into two categories: holistic and embedded. A holistic single-case design is used “when no logical subunits can be identified or when the relevant theory is itself of a holistic nature” (Yin, 2003, p. 45); whereas, an embedded single-case study design involves several units of analyses. The methodology in this study focused on holistic

description and explanation: the purpose of this research was to develop a greater understanding of the work life and demands of a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action.

Part Two of Section Two: Setting of the Study

Merriam (1998), Patton (2002), and Yin (2003) note the importance of describing the setting. Analyzing the case itself “is important for what it reveals about the phenomenon and for what it might represent” (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). This also includes recording any personal beliefs about the particular setting or inferences made about the setting, and elaborating on any historical information, which may help to define the context of this setting. Merriam (1998) states, “This specificity of focus makes it an especially good design for practical problems-for questions, situations, or puzzling occurrences arising from everyday practice” (p. 29).

This study took place in a large-sized middle school in the northeastern part of the United States. Located in southeastern Massachusetts, HMS is the only middle school serving several townships, of which Hope is the largest village with a population of over 20,000 residents. Hope has the most ethnically diverse community in the region, with over 30% non-white residents. While Hope has the most ethnically diverse population out of the surrounding townships, most of the seventh and eighth grade students, who attend HMS, are Caucasian (Adams, 2007).

In 2007-2008, there were approximately 956 students, who attended both the seventh and eighth grades. 49% of the students were in seventh grade, and 51% were in eighth grade. 84% of the students were Caucasian. 6% of the students were Hispanic; 5% were African-American; 3% were Native American; and 2% were Asian. 16% of the students received special education services. 4% of the students were English language learners, and 18% were on free or reduced lunch, which qualified this school to receive Title I funds (Adams, 2007).

The population of incoming students to HMS varied significantly during the past few decades. It increased at one point and then decreased again. As a result of the change in population size, HMS and its staff have experienced much movement and upheaval since the 1970s.

History of Hope Middle School

The following is a chronology of events leading to the culture of the present HMS. These events are important for understanding both the context of the setting and the case study.

Information was gathered from a review of archival data (“The Local Newspaper,” 1999, 2000, 2003, 2005) and documents at HMS.

HMS from the 1970’s to 1980’s

In the 1970s, only seventh and eighth grade students attended HMS. Grade six students were placed in the Catholic school in Hope, and student in grades nine through twelve were situated at Hope High School (HHS). This organizational structure lasted for six years. Then, as the population increased, two new schools were built (i.e., an elementary and a middle school) to accommodate the growing number of elementary school students.

In 1976, Wixon Middle School (WMS) (formerly known as Hope Middle School at Hope) was constructed. As a result, students in grade five were relocated to the Catholic school in Hope. Teachers in the grade six building as well as those in HMS were transplanted to two middle schools – the newly built Chester Middle School (CMS) in adjacent Chester and WMS (Frappy, 1999).

HMS in the 1990’s

Within a period of eight years from 1995 to 2003, there were three principals in CMS. The first principal stayed for three years; the next one for another three years; and the final one for

two years. In contrast, the teachers at WMS had a long-standing principal, John Brown, who had been a teacher at the former HMS at Hope since the early 1970's (Frappy, 2000).

As the population increased in the elementary schools, more room was needed at the middle schools. An area of 45,000 more square feet was added to WMS to house approximately 1200 students (Frappy, 1999). Teachers and students were again relocated during reconstruction. In 1999, 300 sixth graders from WMS were placed temporarily in CMS, while 650 seventh and eighth grade students along with their teachers from WMS were temporarily housed in the newly renovated wing of HHS (Frappy, 1999).

HMS in 2000's

In 2000, the 930 temporarily displaced students returned to their newly renovated middle school (Merry, 2003). From 1995 to 1999, and from 2000 to 2003, two middle schools existed for students in grades six, seven, and eight. The year of 1999 to 2000 accounts for the time period when HMS was renovated.

As the population began to decrease, only one middle school was needed, and the grade five building was sold (Merry, 2003). With the closing of CMS, more than 2,000 middle school students and their teachers were reassigned. CMS, which originally housed grades six through eight, was converted to Frank Chester School (FCS), with students in grades five and six (Merry, 2003).

In 2003-2004, the two middle schools merged and became HMS at Hope (Merry, 2003). With close to 1,000 students, the administrative team consisted of John Brown, Dave Rogers, and Nick Jones, the dean of students (Merry, 2003).

In 2004-2005, John Brown retired, and his assistant principal Dave Rogers became the newly appointed principal of HMS (Merry, 2003). Nick Jones returned to the classroom to teach math.

Dave Roger's administrative team now included two new vice principals and one new prevention specialist, who in essence served as the dean of students. Two other positions were added that year to HMS: a department head of guidance and a department head of special education.

From 2003 to 2005, HMS did not make AYP in both English and math in its subgroups. Because the school had failed to make AYP for three years in its subgroups in math and English, the school was identified for Corrective Action Year 1 in 2005 (MADESE, 2007c). As a result of this, much pressure was placed on the teachers to align curriculum to state standards. In 2005, English and math teachers (followed by science and social studies teachers) began to develop curriculum maps and a scope and sequence for each map. Prior to this, there was a lack of consistency in what teachers taught and when they taught a particular subject area or topic.

In 2005-2006, a new interim vice principal, formerly a math teacher at HMS, and a interim prevention specialist, formerly a physical education teacher were added to the administrative team, which now consisted of Dave Rogers, two vice principals, and two prevention specialists. Both prevention specialists, who were under the teacher's contract, served as the dean of students and were responsible for student discipline. Two new positions were further created at the district level: a math coordinator for grades 7-12 and an English coordinator for grades 7-12. Before these positions were formed, the principal and vice principals of HMS assumed the responsibilities of department chairs for math, English, social studies, history, and for the various enrichments classes (i.e., physical education, health, art, and music). While examining the MCAS math scores, reviewing the current schedule, and analyzing the curriculum, it was decided that more time was needed to teach all of the strands in math.

Therefore, in 2006-2007 a new schedule was implemented in HMS, and teachers received an additional preparatory period (without the presence of students) to work on curriculum maps. A

new math program and curriculum were offered to all HMS students. Five additional math teachers were hired to teach Applied Math, the new math course, to all seventh and eighth grade students. Two new department heads were further added to the science and social studies departments. These department heads only managed grades seven and eight.

In 2006-2007, HMS was also identified in Corrective Action Year 2 for failing to make AYP in its subgroup for math for four consecutive years (MADESE, 2007c). That year, English and math teachers had completed the development of curriculum maps and began to develop the standards-based units for instruction in English and math. Science and social studies teachers were working on creating curriculum maps.

In 2007, Dave Rogers retired. The department heads of guidance, social studies, special education as well as the coordinator of English resigned. Both the department head of social studies as well as the coordinator of English returned to the classroom in HMS. Two new department heads were hired for guidance and special education, and a new position, the coordinator of social studies 7-12, was created.

Before his retirement, Dave Rogers and central office re-examined the middle school adjustment program called MSAP and the program for “severely emotionally disturbed” students entitled SED in May and June of 2007. In spite of the services offered to students in these programs, an alarming number of students were still being placed in residential homes and outside placements each year. The position of the social worker, who was responsible for providing services to both of these programs, was eliminated. In its place and under this new organizational structure, an additional guidance counselor was hired, and the department head of guidance received a reduced caseload to oversee MSAP and to provide counseling services for students in SED. Therefore, in this new model four guidance counselors, including the

department head of guidance, serviced all 900 students at HMS, including those in MSAP and SED.

In Fall 2007, the researcher became the newly appointed principal.

Reasons for Choosing HMS

HMS was a fitting choice for this case study. This school was in Corrective Action with a new principal, for whom this was her first principalship.

Table 2

Adequately Yearly Progress History of HMS

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
English Aggregate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
All Subgroups	-	-	-	-	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Math Aggregate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
All Subgroups	-	-	-	-	No	No	No	No	Yes

As shown in Table 2, from 1999 to 2002, the dash marks indicate that there were not enough students to consist of a subgroup. However, in 2003, there were enough students to constitute a subgroup. From 2003 to 2005, HMS did not make AYP in English or math in its subgroups. Because the school had failed to make AYP for three years in its subgroups in math and English, the school was identified for Needing Improvement Year 2 in 2005. In 2006, HMS was identified in Corrective Action for failing to make AYP in its subgroup for math for four years. In 2007, the school did make AYP in math and English in both the aggregate and its subgroups. Because it takes two years for a school to exit out its accountability status (MADESE, 2007c), HMS was still in Corrective Action. With 18% of the students on free or reduced lunch, it

qualified for Title I funds (MADESE, 2007f). As a Title I school in Corrective Action, the school had stricter sanctions imposed on it than non-Title schools (MADESE, 2007c). If the school fails to make AYP in 2008 in either the aggregate or any subgroup, in English and/or math, HMS must plan for restructuring (20 USCS 6311 § 1116(b)(8)(B)).

Part Three of Section Two: Population, Unit of Analysis, Sample and Selection of Participants, and Ethical Consideration

Population

At the time the on-line survey was administered in Fall 2008, the population of HMS in 2008-2009 consisted of 78 teachers in HMS with 1 to 30 years of teaching experience. With the exception of two teachers, one who was African-American and the other who was Jamaican, the rest of the teachers were Caucasian.

The gender composition for the population of teachers in 2008-2009 was 55 female and 23 male. 7 teachers were in their mid to late 20's. 11 teachers were in their mid 30's. 30 teachers were in their mid to late 40's. 23 teachers were in their mid to late 50's. 7 teachers were in their early to mid 60's. The average age for teachers was about 46 years old.

Table 3 depicts the percentage of teachers who were beginning, intermediate, junior, or veteran teachers in 2008-2009.

Table 3

Number of Beginning, Intermediate, Junior, and Veteran Teachers at HMS in 2008-2009

Identification of Teacher	Frequency	Total
	(Number of Teachers)	Percentage
Beginning (0 to 5 years of teaching experience)	21 Teachers	27%

Identification of Teacher	Frequency (Number of Teachers)	Total Percentage
Junior (10 to 15 years of teaching experience)	23 Teachers	29%
Veteran (More than 15 years of teaching experience)	24 Teachers	31%

73% of the teachers at HMS had more than 6 years of teaching experience.

Further, 19 out of 78 teachers at HMS taught 3 years or less at HMS. 59 teachers at HMS had received professional status or tenure.

Unit of Analysis or Case

The unit of analysis was the interactive relationship between the first year principal in HMS and her teachers.

Sample and Selection of Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to ensure a diversity of perspectives as represented in the population. Patton (1990) asserts that the “logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance, thus the term purposeful sampling” (p. 169). The number of participants in a qualitative study is based upon sufficiency and saturation of information (Merriam, 1998). While sufficiency consists of having enough participants to be representative of the population, saturation of information proposes that the researcher has interviewed enough participants when the information she is collecting begins to repeat itself. Although Merriam (1998) does not offer a specific number, Patton (1990) recommends specifying a minimum sample size “based on expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study” (p. 186). Overall, having all 78 possible teachers partake in the survey who varied in their years of teaching experience; who taught in different

grade levels and departments; and who differed in gender and age helped to satisfy the criterion of reasonable coverage to ensure that a point of saturation or redundancy had been reached (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998).

While the survey was administered to all 78 teachers, only 58 teachers responded. Thus, findings from the on-line survey were based on a sample of 58 teachers, i.e., $N=58$. Tables 5, 6, and 7 in chapter four show that the sample of 58 teachers who responded to the survey are representative of the teacher population in years of teaching experience and in different grade levels and departments.

Ethical Consideration

Possibly, the nature of this study could have made some teachers feel uncomfortable as they were asked by their principal to partake in a study, and some teachers may not have wanted to participate even though participation was voluntary. It was further emphasized to participants that their input was of great importance in propelling the school forward, and that their feedback was vital to ensure that their principal was making every effort to address their concerns and answer their needs.

In accordance with the Boston College Human Subjects Protection Policy, the researcher provided teachers with a detailed explanation of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to privacy and confidentiality. Teachers were made aware that at any time they could withdraw from the study without the fear of any consequences. The decision to participate would have no bearing on relationships with HMS, Hope Public Schools, or Boston College. An email was sent out to all teachers. Also, it was announced at a faculty meeting that participation in the on-line survey (through the SurveyMonkey.com service) was on a strictly voluntary basis and that teacher identities as well as their responses would remain anonymous if they chose to

participate. All data would be kept in a secured, storage area in the researcher's home office. Finally, the design of this study and the instrumentation were reviewed, assessed, and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Boston College.

Section Three: Two Pilot Tests

Two pilot tests were conducted to test the survey questions. A total of six teachers who did not participate in the actual study were selected. Participation was voluntary, and based on availability. Participants in both pilot tests began by reading about the project and signing a consent form.

First Pilot Study

In the first pilot study, three teachers were asked to respond to a set of 10 survey questions. For the most part, all participants were able to answer the questions with ease, except for questions four, six, and eight. After clarifying these particular questions, all teachers were able to respond with ease. Two of the respondents felt that some questions were repetitive and could be combined into one question.

The respondents were then asked to rank the clarity of the questions from 1, which signifies that the question was poorly written; to 5, which means that the question was clearly understood. Most survey questions received a value of 4 or 5. Questions four, six, and eight received a ranking of 1 or 2, and therefore were not sufficiently clear. Respondents were then asked to assist in rewriting those questions for greater clarity.

Findings from this pilot study led the researcher to change three survey questions. Question four "How do you feel about the middle school?" was changed to "What is your overall impression of the middle school?" Question six "What are the most relevant aspects about the middle school that you care deeply about, and why?" was changed to "What are the most

important elements of the middle school that you most want to preserve? Why do you think they are important?” Question eight “What type of principal and/or leadership qualities would be most conducive to this school, and why?” was changed to “Describe the leadership qualities that principals have provided in the past.”

Participants were also asked whether they felt that the survey questions were relevant to the research question. All participants indicated, “Yes.” Respondents were then asked whether they thought more question were needed. All teachers felt that 10 questions adequately covered the extent of the research question.

Second Pilot Study

In the second pilot study, three different teachers, not involved in the first pilot study, examined the revised questions from the first pilot study. Respondents were asked to comment on the number of questions and about the clarity of each question.

Comments included “too many questions,” “some of these questions are repetitive,” “group some of these questions together,” and “provide a clearer introduction about the study.”

As a result of this second pilot study, the number of questions was reduced from 10 to 5, and respondents helped the researcher to identify the quintessential questions as well as to compose a brief introduction to the survey. Respondents further felt that many questions were repetitive and could be combined. The new questions included the following:

1. What are your overall impressions of the middle school?
2. From your perspective, what are the major strengths of the middle school?
3. From your perspective, what are the major challenges facing the middle school?
4. What are the most important elements of the middle school that you most want to preserve?

5. Describe the leadership that past principals have provided to the school.

In summary, Creswell (2002) states that pilot studies help to determine whether or not the research instrument has merit and to correct identified flaws. This first pilot study helped the researcher to determine which questions were confusing, and as a result, a couple of survey questions were rewritten. The second pilot study helped to narrow down the questions even further and to create an introductory page for the survey. Both changes were invaluable to the present study and assisted in developing a more effective instrument for gathering data.

Section Four: Instruments

Yin (2003) points out that “a good case study will . . . use as many sources as possible” (p. 85), which may include archival records, documentation, direct observations, interviews, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. By triangulating the data, “the events of facts of the case study [will be] supported by more than a single source of evidence” (Yin, 2003, p. 99). Therefore, to improve the validity of the study and to make this research a “good case study,” several instruments were used to collect data: an on-line survey, the researcher’s reflective journals and field notes, and documentation.

Section Five: Role of the Researcher

The researcher of this study was the principal of HMS. As the principal of HMS, her role was that of a participant observer. She was more than an observer who watched the teachers from the perspective of an outsider; rather, she was immersed in the setting and absorbed in the work and experiences of those on the inside (Patton, 2002). The degree “to which it is possible for an evaluator to become a participant in a program will depend partly on the nature of the program” (Patton, 2002, p. 266). As the principal of the school, the researcher was mindful of her positional authority. Therefore, every effort was made to ensure teachers that their opinions and

perspectives would not have any negative impact on them or their work. Participation on the on-line survey posed minimal to no risk for teachers, as their identities and responses remained anonymous, and participation was completely voluntary.

Participants were further given a full explanation of the project's purpose. The researcher's field notes were recorded in some logs of her journal entries. Most of her journal entries contained reflections on her daily activities as a principal. Some of them, however, were the researcher's observations of teachers and their responses to her conversations with them. Among them, she captured her personal interactions with teachers. The researcher was careful to use a combination of participation and observation in an effort to "[understand] the setting as an insider while describing it to and for outsiders" (Patton, 2002, p. 268).

Section Six: Data Collection Procedures

Originally, data gathering was planned to consist of the following: 1) the one-on-one interviews with teachers; 2) a focus group interview with teachers who did not participate in the one-on-one interviews; 3) the researcher's reflective journals and field notes; and 4) a review of documents. To obtain IRB approval, the researcher modified her plans for data collection. Instead of conducting one-one interviews and focus group interviews with a total of nine teachers, the researcher administered an on-line survey to a population of 78 teachers. This revised procedure received IRB approval, and it was agreed upon that this method of data collection guaranteed minimal to no risk to participants, as teachers' identities and their responses remained anonymous on the on-line survey.

Hence, data collection now consisted of 1) the use of the on-line SurveyMonkey.com service; 2) the researcher's reflective journals and field notes; as well as 3) collection of documents from the HMS archive.

On-Line Survey

According to Garson (2007), survey research is “perhaps one of the most dominant forms of data collection in the social sciences, providing for efficient collection of data over broad populations, amenable to administration in person, by telephone, and over the Internet (p. 1). Internet applications, such as email, IM, MOOs, and chat rooms are used specifically for qualitative interviewing (Kazmer, & Xie, 20008).

The SurveyMonkey.com service was chosen as the most appropriate web-based application for this particular study. First, the researcher found this service to be a versatile, allowing for easy design and use. Second, the SurveyMonkey.com service was accessible to all potential participants. Third, using SurveyMonkey.com assured participants that their identities and their responses would remain anonymous. As a result of this change in data collection procedures, the researcher no longer needed to conduct two sets of interviews. The interview questions could now be posted on-line. Participants were further able to take this survey at a time most convenient to them.

Procedures for Using the On-Line SurveyMonkey.com Service

On November 17, 2008, an email was sent to all participants providing them with a detailed explanation of the study and of the survey. This email further stated to all teachers that participation was voluntary and ensured them that their identities as well as their responses would remain anonymous. A link to the on-line survey was provided to all participants in the email. The survey began on November 18, 2008 and ended two weeks later on December 2, 2008.

The first web page that participants encountered (once they logged on to the SurveyMonkey.com website) was the consent form. If potential teachers agreed to participate in

the study, then they proceeded to the next page. This page listed three questions, asking participants about the number of years of teaching experience they had, the grades that they taught, and whether or not the respondent taught on-team (i.e., English, math, science, social studies, or special education) or off-team (i.e., art, Conversational French, French, music, health, and physical education). Participants then proceeded to the next page, which contained seven open-ended questions about principal entry. The on-line survey is provided in Appendix B.

Researcher's Reflective Journals and Field Notes

The second data collection method was the researcher's journal entries. Merriam (1998) notes that personal documents are “a reliable source of data concerning a person's attitudes, beliefs, and view of the world” (p. 116). Rossman and Rallis (2003) remark, “Observation takes you inside the setting; it helps you discover the complexity in social settings by being there” (p. 194). Therefore, every night from July 1, 2007 to January 1, 2008, the researcher summarized the events that had occurred during the day. She reflected on her feelings. She recorded her struggles, her tasks, what she hoped to achieve, and how she planned to do so. The researcher's journal entries not only recorded her personal thoughts and experiences as a first year principal working in this school but also captured the daily interactions with and observations of the teachers.

In both her journal entries and field notes, the researcher kept both a running record and observer comments to capture as much detail as possible when describing her interactions with teachers. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), a running record depicts “the physical environment and the activities and interactions among the people in the environment” (p. 196); whereas, observer comments record the “emotional reactions to events, analytic insights, questions about meaning, and thoughts for modifying [my] design” (p. 196). In essence, the

researcher's record constituted a detailed log of events as they had occurred. All of these records helped to establish a “corpus of data from which . . . [the researcher’s] assertions . . . [can] logically flow” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 178).

Documents

The researcher’s final instrument of data collection was documentation. Merriam (1998) asserts that these artifacts are particularly relevant to the study because “they can contain clues, even startling insights, into the phenomenon under study” (p. 119). Jentz et al. (1982) and King and Blumer (2000) further stress the importance for a beginning principal taking the time to understand the descriptive culture; that is, the organization’s values, behavioral norms, and cast of characters, in an effort to understand where and how to begin. The researcher, therefore, reviewed agendas, articles, and reports to develop a greater insight into the school and its culture. She collected documents during her first year as a principal, mostly from July 1, 2007 to January 1, 2008.

Timeline of Data Collection

In the best of circumstances, data from the on-line survey would have been collected in the researcher’s first year as a principal. However, due to time constraints, the survey was not administered to teachers until the researcher’s second year as a principal.

July 1, 2007 marks the official first day that the researcher became the principal of HMS. Therefore, data collection from the journal entries and documents spanned from July 1, 2007 to January 1, 2008. Although many teachers were not working during the summer months, she did meet a couple of teachers who were involved in summer curriculum work. The researcher’s journal entries reflect these conversations. Further, the researcher had the rare opportunity to visit and meet with some of the HMS teachers in April 2-3, 2007 by participating in an all day

school event called Challenge Day. On April 9, 2007, the researcher also had a meeting with Dave Rogers and his two vice principals to learn more about HMS. As a result of these events, the researcher wrote some journal entries and collected some documents before her official entry of July 1.

Section Seven: Data Analysis and Interpretation

Teacher responses from the on-line survey, the researcher's journal entries and field notes as well as the documents were analyzed using constant comparative method and grounded theory. Although grounded theory has been identified as a type of qualitative research (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Merriam, 1998), it is also a method that has been used for data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Patton, 2002). Therefore, in keeping with grounded theory, analysis was ongoing and included 1) simultaneous collection and analysis of data; 2) the coding process; 3) the comparative methods; 4) the memo writing aimed at the construction of conceptual analyses; 5) the refinement of the researcher's emerging theoretical propositions; and 6) the affirmation of those ideas (Charmaz, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Although the researcher had collected data from her journal entries and documents before the teacher responses from the on-line survey, she began by analyzing the data from the on-line survey first because these responses came directly from the teachers themselves. Therefore, in reviewing the responses from the on-line survey, the researcher included thick descriptions and added comments to the teachers' responses. Using line-by-line coding, the researcher further wrote a description next to each line of the teacher's response (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

After the initial codes were identified from the survey, the data were displayed in coded forms to see if similar concepts and themes had emerged, especially between and among teachers with different years of teaching experience. For example, did teachers with 0 to 5 years of teaching

experience and teachers with more than 15 years of teaching experience share any similar initial codes?

Microsoft Word was then used because it easily identified and counted the number of times that the same word, phrase, or description was used. These concepts were grouped together by “categorizing them under more abstract explanatory terms, that is, categories” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 114).

Next, the properties of categories and their dimensions were defined, and the researcher asked herself, “What is going on here?” The response to this question was key: it allowed the researcher to search for “repeated patterns of happenings . . . or interactions that represent[ed] what people [did] or [said], . . . in response to the problems and situations in which they [found] themselves”(Strauss & Corbin, 2006, p. 129). Once categories were identified, they were broken down further into subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 2006).

Moving from initial code to categories, and from category to subcategory, the researcher used constant comparative analysis. As such, data were compared, and “categories and their properties emerge[d] or [were] integrated together” (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002, p. 32). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), coding is about breaking the data apart in analytically relevant ways so that data can further be explored and meaning defined.

As the researcher identified her categories and subcategories, she also placed a category next to its subcategories and reflected on how these categories were related to one another (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This comparative process helped to determine how these major categories were linked to each other. As categories were retrieved again, divided into subcategories, spliced, and then linked back together, this procedure moved coding to interpretation. The researcher then looked for patterns and regularities, as well as paradoxes and irregularities to formulate

hypotheses based on deductive reasoning (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), grounded theory involves both inductive and deductive processes because “at the heart of theorizing lies the interplay of making inductions (deriving concepts, their properties, and dimensions from data) and deductions (hypothesizing about the relationships between concepts)” (p. 454). Finally, in presenting her findings, the researcher used narratives, direct quotations from respondents, and tables to depict the process for developing codes, categories, and themes.

The analyses from her journal entries and documents further helped to either support findings from her on-line survey or to identify outliers and other possibilities. Using comparative analysis and grounded theory, the researcher defined larger categories and themes from her journal entries and her documents. Once the researcher established patterns, themes, and categories through inductive analysis, deduction occurred as the researcher examined any deviated cases and began to generalize hypotheses based on the relationships between concepts (Patton, 2002).

The researcher then used the findings from the on-line survey to test, triangulate, and substantiate the findings from her journal entries and documents.

Section Eight: Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability

Creswell (2003) writes:

Validity does not carry the same connotations as it does in quantitative research, nor is it a companion of reliability (examining stability or consistency of responses . . .) or generalizability (the external validity of applying result to new settings, people, or samples, . . .). In a limited way, qualitative researchers can use reliability to check for consistent patterns of theme development among some investigators on a team . . . Overall, however, reliability and generalizability play a minor role in qualitative inquiry. (p. 195)

On the other hand, validity is seen as a strength of qualitative research because it is used to “emphasize the honesty, believability, expertise, and integrity of the researcher” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 164) in qualitative research.

The change to using a web-based survey offered both benefits as well as raised some potential challenges with respect to validity. Because respondents recorded their own responses, the researcher did not have to transcribe any tapes, thus ensuring accurate recording of responses (Kazmer & Xie, 2008, Mann & Stewart, 2000). The respondents could address the survey in the privacy of their own homes and be reassured of their anonymity. Given such options, the researcher believed that teacher participants may have responded more openly and with less bias than they might have in a face-to-face interview with the principal researcher.

On the other hand, in spite of its practicality, accessibility, and assurance of anonymity, using any type of computer-mediated communication (i.e., SurveyMoney.com service) to conduct qualitative research, as opposed to face-to-face methods can still pose some difficulties (Mann & Stewart, 2000). For example, facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language are lost when the interview is conducted over the Internet rather than in person (Kazmer & Xie, 2008). To minimize these effects, Mann and Stewart (2000) note that some participants have used emoticons, which are a form of electronic paralanguage, to convey affect and establish relational tone in their web-based responses (Kazmer & Xie, 2008). Kazmer and Xie (2008) as well as Mann and Stewart (2000) point out that sarcasm is difficult to read in computer-mediated communication. Mann and Stewart (2000) further contend, “If let undetected, it can lead to serious misunderstanding” (p. 15).

Therefore, in an effort to increase the likelihood of accurately interpreting computer-mediated communication, much time was spent reading about qualitative interviewing and survey

approaches on the Internet (e.g., Brown & Johnson, 2003; Mann & Stewart, 2000; Schonlau, Fricker, & Elliot, 2002; Sue & Ritter, 2007), reading blogs, and practicing communication skills in virtual chat rooms. As a result of these steps, the researcher became more familiar and comfortable with this interaction mode and developed a greater understanding of the norms of affective communication. This in turn helped the researcher to interpret and analyze affective data more effectively (Mann & Stewart, 2000).

Although the long hours spent on such practice helped the researcher to develop a greater skill set in using computer-mediated communication, response rate and item nonresponse remain possible challenges for any survey-based research, including on-line surveys. Both response rate and item nonresponse can affect the validity of the researcher's study (Garner, 2007; Kazmer & Xie, 2008). While a high response rate is important to ensure that the respondents' views are reflective of the total sample, a low response rate can introduce bias, and thus increase the likelihood that the views expressed may be more reflective of a subset of the population rather than the entire population (Archer, 2008; Barribeau et al., 1993).

Hence, to minimize these effects and thus increase the validity of this study, much time was spent on carefully designing the survey and examining the survey questions. According to Garson (2007, 2008) response rates can increase by carefully considering the survey design (i.e., the survey order, the item length, the length of the survey, and the questions). Questions were purposely sequenced from general and less encompassing items (i.e., the demographic information) to more specific and potentially more sensitive items (i.e., the open-ended questions about school and principal leadership). The three close-ended questions were placed at the beginning of the survey to arouse interest and to assist the researcher in categorizing the responses later; whereas, the remaining five questions were open-ended and placed toward the

end of the survey. These questions asked the participants to provide specific examples. Also, the length of each question and the survey instrument itself were both kept relatively short as further mechanisms to increase both the response rate of the survey and to decrease item nonresponse rate (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Finally, all of the five open-ended questions were tested in two pilot studies. Results from these studies show that these questions were clearly written and aligned to the research question.

As another step to improve the validity of the study, an account was presented of any discrepant information because it added a layer of truth and authenticity to the study. The researcher, therefore, reported the total size of the sample, the overall percentage of returns, and the percentage of the total sample responding to each item. The researcher also noted when the different sources of data were collected; that is, when the journal entries were written, when the documents were collected, and when the survey was administered to teachers.

Rich, thick description was also used to present the findings. This helped to “transport readers to the setting and [gave] the discussion an element of shared experiences” (Creswell, 2003, p. 196).

This detailed information and presentation of findings are vital because they provide to readers a more accurate and detailed account of how the study was conducted, how data were collected, and how conclusions were therefore drawn (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Creswell states, “Because real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce, discussing contrary information adds to the credibility of an account for a reader” (p. 196).

Finally, to enhance the validity of the study, multiple sources of data were used. Teacher responses from the on-line survey, the researcher’s journal entries and field notes, as well as a collection of documents were used to build a coherent justification for themes. Yin (2003) notes,

“With data triangulation, the potential problems of construct validity also can be addressed because the multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon” (p. 99).

When compared to validity, generalizability plays a minimal role in qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2003). Hence, it is important to realize that the ability to generalize findings from this single case study was limited. As Stake (1995) explains:

Qualitative case study is highly personal research. Persons studied are studies in depth.

Researchers are encouraged to include their own personal perspectives in the interpretation.

The way the case and the researcher interact is presumed unique and not necessarily reproducible for other cases and researchers. The quality and utility of the research is not based on its reproducibility but on whether or not the meanings generated, by the researcher or the reader, are valued. Thus, a personal valuing of the work is expected. (p. 135)

The goal, therefore, of qualitative research is to understand how people make sense of their experiences, and in this case, to understand intimately the demanding needs and pressures that a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action faces.

Section Nine: Frameworks for Discussing the Findings

As a first year principal, the researcher did not have a firm a priori expectation or knowledge of how long an entry phase should last for a new principal in a school in Corrective Action. In this body of work, the researcher recorded journal entries and collected documents from July 1, 2007 to January 1, 2008. Data from the on-line survey, which ideally should have been collected during this time frame, were not obtained until the researcher's second year as a principal, or from November 17, 2008 to December 2, 2008. It is plausible that due to this time frame some of the teacher responses from the on-line survey may have been influenced by potential concerns,

which arose during this time. While these factors are further discussed in chapter four, lessons learned from this in-depth study are invaluable and hopefully can offer first year principals with a road map of where to start and how best to begin.

Conclusion

In summary, a qualitative single-case study approach was employed for the study. A change in data collection procedures was required in order to obtain IRB approval. To receive IRB approval, the researcher changed her data collection procedures and conducted a web-based survey. Data collection therefore consisted of 1) the use of an on-line survey; 2) journal entries and field notes; as well as 3) documentation. Journal writing and the collection of documents occurred from July 1, 2007 to January 1, 2008, while the on-line survey was administered to teachers in Fall 2008. The constant comparative method and grounded theory were used to analyze the rich sources of data. Findings are presented in chapter four.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Foreward

While the first three chapters of this dissertation provided readers with an overview of the study, a review of the related literature, and the research design respectively, the purpose of chapter four is to present the study's findings and to address the research question. Chapter five concludes with a discussion of the study's findings and future implications for research.

The chapter is comprised of five sections.

Section one restates the problem and the research question.

Section two presents the findings from the on-line survey. Part one analyzes the overall percentages of returns and the total sample response rate for each item. Part two provides a summary of the demographics of respondents. Part three highlights the development of codes, categories, and themes. Direct quotations from teacher responses are used to substantiate themes. Part four then highlights the major findings from the on-line survey.

Comprised of ten parts, section three presents the findings from the researcher's journal entries and field notes. Part one begins by listing the categories and codes derived from the researcher's journal entries and field notes. In parts two through nine, each of the eight categories is defined in greater detail, and excerpts from the researcher's journal entries and field notes are used to reinforce major themes. Part ten then presents the major findings from the researcher's journal entries and field notes.

Section four is composed of four parts and elaborates on the findings by a review of three pertinent documents: the School Climate report (N, 2004) in part one, curriculum and former initiatives in part two, and the restriction policy in part three. Quotes and excerpts from

documents are interwoven throughout parts one through three to support major themes. Part four concludes with a list of major findings from the researcher's review of relevant documents.

It is important to note that some findings from the researcher's on-line survey, journal entries and field notes, and review of documents overlap, and some are even repetitive.

To eliminate duplication of findings, section five consolidates the repeated findings from sections two, three, and four, and presents a summary of all major findings.

Chapter four ends with the conclusion.

Section One: The Problem and the Research Question

The purpose of this dissertation was to develop a greater understanding of some of the challenges and demands that a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action faces and to identify potential pitfalls. It is the hope and belief of the researcher that lessons learned from this study can provide new principals facing similar circumstances with the keys to a successful entry. Because the scope of this study focused on the teacher perspective as the only frame of reference, the research question was:

What factors do middle school teachers perceive as vital for creating a successful entry for a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action?

Data from the on-line survey with teachers, the researcher's journal entries and field notes, and documents about HMS were collected and analyzed to address this research question.

Section Two: Findings from the On-Line Survey

Data collection took place from November 18, 2008 and ended two weeks later on December 2, 2008. Due to time constraints, it is important to note that the survey, which ideally would have been administered to teachers during the researcher's first year as a principal, was not given to teachers until the researcher's second year as a principal. As such, it is probable that some of the teacher responses from the on-line survey may have reflected potential concerns, which arose during that time. These matters were noted and recorded below in part two of this section.

Part One of Section Two: Overall Percentages of Returns and of Total Sample Response Rate for Each Item

While the survey was administered to all 78 teachers in HMS, only 58 respondents answered the survey. Table 4 indicates the response count for each question and shows the number of

respondents who answered a particular question and the number of respondents who skipped that particular question based on the sample of 58 respondents, i.e., N=58.

Table 4

Response Count for Each Question (N=58)

Question Number	Question	Answered Question	Skipped Question
1	How many years in total have you been teaching?	56	2
2	Please indicate all grade(s) that you have taught.	57	1
3	Please indicate whether you teach on-team or off-team.	57	1
4	What are your overall impressions of the middle school?	36	22
5	From your perspective, what are the major strengths of this school?	36	22
6	From your perspective, what are the major challenges facing the middle school? Why do you think they are important?	36	22
7	What are the most important elements of the middle school that you most want to preserve?	35	23
8	Describe the leadership that past principals have provided to the school.	35	23

As depicted in Table 4, not all 58 teachers from the sample completed the entire survey. Fifty-six respondents answered question one. Fifty-seven respondents answered questions two and

three. Thirty-six respondents answered questions four through six. Thirty-five respondents answered questions seven and eight.

According to Sue and Kitter (2007), “response rates for web-based surveys are approximately 30%” (p. 8). Hamilton’s (2004b) and Kwak and Radler’s (2002) studies on response rates of web-based surveys show response rates of 32.53% and 27.4% respectively after two weeks. Response rates for the researcher’s on-line survey are above this range within the time frame of two weeks. Further, Hamilton’s (2004a) study on attrition patterns in on-line surveys show that “completion rates varied greatly from survey to survey . . . , ranging from 26.09% to 100%. In the researcher’s on-line survey, on average 63% of all respondents completed the entire survey, which is considered “reasonably good” for web-based surveys (Hamilton, 2004b; Kwak & Radler, 2002).

Hence, findings from the on-line survey question are based on a sample of 58 respondents, with more than half of all respondents completing the entire survey.

Part Two of Section Two: Summary of Demographics of Teacher Respondents

Questions one through three address the demographics of respondents. Tables 5, 6, and 7 show the response percents and the response counts or (the number of tallies) for questions one, two, and three respectively.

Table 5

Response Percent and Response Count for Question One (N=58)

How many years in total have you been teaching?	Response Percent	Response Count
0 to 5 years	16.1%	9
6 to 9 years	8.9%	5

How many years in total have you been teaching?	Response Percent	Response Count
10 to 15 years	17.9%	10
Over 15 years	57.1%	32
Answered Question		56
Skipped Question		2

Table 6

Response Percent and Response Count for Question Two (N=58)

Please indicate all grade(s) that you have taught.	Response Percent	Response Count
K-4	33.3%	19
5-6	50.9%	29
7-8	96.5%	55
9-12	38.6%	22
College Level	12.3%	7
Answered Question		57
Skipped Question		1

Table 7

Response Percent and Response Count for Question Three (N=58)

Please indicate whether you teach on-team or off-team.	Response Percent	Response Count
On-Team	57.9%	33
Off-Team	42.1%	24

Answered Question	57
Skipped Question	1

Table 5 indicates that more than half of the teachers who responded to this question, i.e., 57.1% had taught for over than fifteen years. Table 3 on page 110 shows that 31% of all 78 teachers at HMS are denoted as veteran teachers with more than 15 years of teaching experience. Therefore, it appears that more than half of the responses from this survey came from veteran teachers.

Table 6 shows that a large percentage of respondents had taught in grade K-4 and 5-6.

Table 7 illustrates that more on-team teachers, i.e., about 58% responded to this survey than off-team teachers, although about 42% of all responses did come from off-team teachers. This percentage is reflective of the greater number of on-team teachers than off-team teachers at HMS.

Part Three of Section Two: Teacher Responses to Each Survey Question, Initial Codes, Categories, and Themes

Part two is divided into seven subsections, i.e., subsections A-G. Each subsection restates the survey question, defines codes and categories, and presents the major themes for each question. Findings for each question are presented at the end of each subsection. Additionally, individual teacher responses to each question are located in Appendixes C-G, and many of the respondents used the term staff to define the teacher body. This is different from how the researcher used the term staff. (She used the terms staff and staff members to define the overall personnel at HMS, including the teachers.)

Subsection A: Findings from Question Four

For question four, teachers were asked, “What are your overall impressions of the middle school?” 36 out of the 58 respondents answered this question.

Using line-by-line coding, grounded theory, and the constant comparative method, initial categories and codes were developed from the 36 teacher responses and are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Initial Categories and Codes from the Teachers’ Responses to Question Four (N=36)

What are your overall impressions of the middle school?	Response Count
<i>“Caring and supportive administrators”</i>	N=2
“caring administrators” “strive to be the best” “supportive”	
<i>“Caring teachers”</i>	N=26
“care a great deal for one another” “cares about the students” “very supportive to each other”	
<i>“Dedicated teachers”</i>	N=26
“dedicated, hardworking” doing whatever it takes “determined to do their best,”	
“love the school” “passionate people” “preparing them for high school and beyond”	
“very responsive to student needs”	
<i>Dissatisfied staff</i>	N=2
disempowered vice principals “held accountable for issues that are miniscule”	
“micromanaged” “treated unprofessionally”	
<i>Divisive staff</i>	N=2

“factions” not unified	
<i>“Educated teachers”</i>	N=26
“know exactly what they are doing” “know how to teach... We should teach you!” “who know what they are doing”	
<i>“Excellent school with great teachers”</i>	N=26
“a great building” “excellent school... teachers are fantastic... wonderful school”	
“Great, great school” “Fantastic school” “Great school with professionals who know what they are doing.” “Great school with teachers who are professional and care about the students” “solidly good educational institute” “very good teachers” “well trained”	
<i>Fear of change from teachers</i>	N=5
“another transition... difficult time for everyone” “budget and restructuring weigh heavily on my mind” “challenges” “tense and on guard”	
<i>Need to change</i>	N=4
“firmed up” “needs work” “no student accountability” not student centered	
<i>“Professional teachers”</i>	N=26
“professional staff who know what we are doing”	
<i>Resistance to change</i>	N=5
“difficult school” “lost in negativity” “older, more experienced teachers... slow to change”	

Note. The italicized expressions are denoted as categories. Each category is then followed by the codes that are linked to it. Exact quotations from the participants’ responses are encapsulated by quotation marks. (Many of the categories and codes in Table 8 were taken directly from teacher responses.) The second column, Response Count, represents the total number of teachers, whose responses are associated with that particular category.

As Table 8 illustrates, there are eleven categories, i.e., *caring and supportive administrators*, *caring teachers*, *dedicated teachers*, *dissatisfied staff*, *divisive staff*, *educated staff*, *excellent school with great staff*, *fear of change from teachers*, *need to change*, *professional teachers*, and *resistance to change*.

The initial codes “budget and restructuring” are reflective of the time, in which the survey was administered. In 2008, when the survey was administered, HPSD faced a 5.5 million dollar deficit for fiscal year 2010 (FY10). For HPSD, this shortfall will mean the closing of two elementary schools; the restructuring of grade levels across the district; redistricting; the loss of jobs for some staff members at HMS; and possible transfers of HMS teachers to another school in the district. Additionally, HMS was placed under Restructuring Year 1 in 2008 because HMS did not make AYP in math in its subgroup of special education in 2007.

Further, 26 out of the 36 respondents perceived the school to be excellent with caring, dedicated, educated, and professional teachers who “know exactly what they are doing” and “how to teach.” This pervasive theme seemed to be present in all five dominant categories, i.e., *caring teachers*, *dedicated staff*, *educated staff*, *excellent school with great staff*, and *professional staff*, and interwoven throughout the teachers’ responses.

2 out of 36 respondents reported divisiveness among teachers. 4 out of 36 respondents remarked on the need for change. 5 out of 36 respondents directly commented on the resistance to change from the teacher body, while 2 out of 36 respondents shared their dissatisfaction of the present leadership.

The themes present in the answers to question four are 1) HMS is an “excellent school”; 2) HMS has “caring, dedicated, educated, and professional teachers”; and 3) for the most part,

change is unnecessary and somewhat unwelcomed because HMS is a “great, great school . . . [with] great staff who are experienced and know what they are doing and know how to teach.”

Finding One: A new principal entering a school in Corrective Action Year 2, with the explicit mandate to make some necessary changes, should bear in mind that teachers may not share the belief that change is necessary.

Subsection B: Findings from Question Five

Next, respondents were asked, “From your perspective, what are the major strengths of this school?” 36 out of 58 respondents answered this question. Table 9 illustrates the categories developed from teacher responses.

Table 9

Categories from the Teachers’ Responses to Question Five (N=36)

From your perspective, what are the major strengths of this school?	Response
	Count
<i>“Caring Teachers”</i>	N=36
<i>“Dedicated teachers”</i>	N=36
<i>“Hardworking teachers”</i>	N=36
<i>“Looping”</i>	N=7
<i>Positive school climate</i>	N=5
<i>“Professional teachers”</i>	N=36
<i>“Supportive and caring administration”</i>	N=5
<i>“Teaming”</i>	N=5
<i>“Various clubs and programs”</i>	N=5

As Table 9 lists, all 36 participants remarked that the major strength of this school stemmed from its caring, dedicated, hardworking, professional teachers. This theme was similar to the results from question four. Both Tables 8 and 9 shared similar categories of *caring*, *dedicated*, and *professional*.

Further, 5 out of the 36 teacher responses included references to a “supportive and caring administration,” which was a similar finding from question four.

Other responses to question five included “looping,” “teaming,” and “various clubs and programs” offered at HSM. Therefore, the categories *looping*, *teaming*, and *various clubs and programs* were created. The category *positive school climate* resulted from the initial codes such as “collegial behavior of staff,” “creating safe and nurturing environments,” “positive environment,” “supportive teaching/learning environment,” and “sense of worth and belonging.”

Further, the category *hardworking* was regrouped with *dedicated*, and the categories, *caring* and *dedicated*, were regrouped with *professionalism*. *Hardworking*, *dedicated*, and *caring* were often referenced and associated with the category *professionalism* from teacher responses.

As illustrated from question four, more than 70% of the teacher respondents perceived HMS to be an excellent school. All 36 responses or 100% of all respondents indicated that the strength of HMS lies in its highly qualified and professional staff. Because of this pervasive belief, which was also substantiated by the findings from question four, it appears that very few respondents believed change to be necessary. As one teacher stated, “The staff as a whole is the school’s life-line. We can be a driving force to be reckoned with. It depends on how you choose to lead.”

Another remarked, “We are a committed group who is hardworking despite being labeled ‘underperforming.’ We come in everyday and play many roles in the lives of the students. We are their teacher, role model, friend, and often times, their parent.”

Finding Two: A new principal entering a school in Corrective Action Year 2 should recognize that teachers may not understand why change is necessary and, therefore, do not feel the need to change. To be successful in her first year, it will be vital for the new principal to prepare her teachers for change and to help them begin to visualize ways to become better for themselves and for the school.

Subsection C: Findings from Question Six

In question six, respondents were asked, “From your perspective, what are the major challenges facing the middle school? Why do you think they are important?” 36 out of 58 teachers responded to this question.

Using line-by-line coding, grounded theory, and the constant comparative method, initial categories and codes were developed from the 36 teachers responses and are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

Categories from the Teachers’ Responses to Question Six (N=36)

From your perspective, what are the major challenges facing the middle school?	Response
Why do you think they are important?	Count
<i>Administration and Central Office</i>	N=3
<i>“Budget”</i>	N=18
<i>“budget constraints” “budget crisis”</i>	N=4
<i>Divisive faculty</i>	
<i>Administration versus faculty and faculty versus administration, creating a “TEAM”</i>	
<i>“unify the faculty” “math and Sped teachers” versus others</i>	

“Ever-changing student population”

N=8

“additional service and innovative strategies” “changing population,” “hard to teach kids who do not speak English and who have so many difficulties,” “more behavioral management for the emotionally challenged” “need more ELL instruction” “serve population we have enrolled” “students from broken, drug-addled families”

Intolerance of other teachers and of their teaching styles

N=3

“becoming more accepting of others” needing to be more “open and willing to self-reflect” needing to be more “tolerant of other teaching styles”

Lack of a shared vision

N=8

common middle school philosophy, dealing with constant organizational and structural changes “developing the sociology of the child” “make it breathe like one organism” “sense of community” shared identity “unify the faculty”

Lack of parental involvement

N=4

keeping parents well-informed, lack of parental concern, lack of parental involvement, lack of parental supervision at home

Low morale due to budget issues

N=9

“affected school morale” “affects our school climate in a negative manner” “afraid” “bleak future” concerns about budget issues, “discouraged” “Does anyone care?” “fear of not knowing” “fearful” “makes staff a bit on edge” “makes me nervous” “maintaining a positive attitude in difficult times” might not exist as is next year” “nervous not having a job”

“MCAS”

N=7

“DESE regulations” “flawed tests” “improving MCAS scores” “meeting AYP”

“under the gun with MCAS tests”

Resistance to change

N=5

“getting over the hump” “learning to embrace change versus mistrust” “nothing wrong”

“nothing needs to be changed” “still working on accepting change”

“Restructuring”

N=9

“Rumor mill”

N=1

“misinformation” “stay in my room” “stay out of it”

“School culture and climate”

N=4

“abounding with negativity” “bring the changes to the climate of the school” “improve morale”

School discipline

N=3

“disruptive students,” more supervision of wandering students in the hallway

“School size”

N=2

“sense of community” “too big” “too large”

“Special education population”

N=5

“increased sped students” “full of laws” “underfunded”

“Team system”

N=1

“team system takes away from a total staff identity”

“Time”

N=1

“not enough time”

“Union meetings”

N=1

“hard to deal with”

“Unmotivated students”

N=6

“unmotivated students who choose to fail good teachers”

Based on teacher responses, the major challenges facing the middle school are the *budget* and *restructuring*. 18 out of 36 respondents clearly identified the *budget* as HMS’ biggest challenge, while 9 out of 36 respondents believed it to be *restructuring*. Feelings of *low morale* were associated with the budget crisis. 9 out of 36 teachers felt “fearful,” “nervous,” and “anxious” due to the looming budget cuts.

Recognizing that the timing of the survey more than likely impacted these teacher responses, it is important to examine the other categories. The next highest response count is *lack of a shared vision*. 8 out of 36 respondents recognized the importance of cultivating a shared vision and developing a common identity. 4 respondents noted a *divisive faculty*, stressing the need to not only create a greater coherence between the administration and the teacher body but also between and among the teachers themselves.

Divisive faculty was further regrouped with *lack of a shared vision*, as both categories shared similar codes. One teacher attributed the *team structure* as “tak[ing] away from a total staff identity.” Two teachers attributed the *size of the school* as limiting teachers from the opportunities of creating a greater “sense of community.” One respondent stated:

The main challenge is to unify the faculty, to make it breath like one organism, which will bring the changes to the climate of the school. It should become a TEAM. It is important because the students would feel it and act differently.

8 out of 36 respondents remarked on the increasing number of students with disabilities and from disruptive home lives as relevant issues. Therefore, *special education population* and *unmotivated students* were regrouped with the category *ever-changing student population*

because teachers in their responses often referred to these groups as “the most challenging” or “difficult to teach.”

As one respondent stated, “We have an increasing number of students who are at-risk for dropping out of school, are disengaged, unmotivated, and who require additional services and innovative strategies to ensure that they will remain in school.”

Another teacher further expressed, “We have a changing population. We need more ELL instruction. WE have increased number of SPED students, and we are constantly under the gun with MCAS tests.”

Further, 7 out of 36 respondents identified MCAS as an issue. 5 out of these 7 respondents perceived the MCAS testing system as “flawed” and responsible for “failing good schools.”

5 out of 36 respondents noted a *resistance to change* from the teacher body. 4 out of 36 respondents identified that the *school culture and climate* needed to improve; whereas, 3 out of 36 respondents perceived that the *intolerance of others and of their teaching styles* as potential obstacles.

The categories *rumor mill* and *union meetings* were identified as other impediments to the success of the middle school. Three categories, the *intolerance of others and of their teaching styles*, the existence of a *rumor mill*, and challenging *union meetings* were regrouped with the larger category, *resistance to change*, because they shared similar themes.

However, when compared to the other 36 respondents, only a handful of teachers foresaw the *resistance to change* (from the teacher body) as a potential obstacle facing HMS. As confirmed from the teacher responses to question four, most respondents perceived HMS to be an “excellent school” with “well-qualified and professional staff.” This theme was further reinforced by teacher responses to question five, in which all 36 respondents stated that “the

professional staff is the major strength of HMS.” Therefore, even though there was a group of teachers who perceived the importance of creating a *shared vision and a common identity* as vital to propelling HMS forward, responses from question six indicate that a larger group of teachers associated the *low morale* of the school to the *budget* crisis. The majority of respondents did not feel there was a *need for change*.

Finding Three: A new principal entering a school in Corrective Action Year 2 should recognize that often, a new principal is confronted with many different issues, and all at once. She cannot solve all of the problems alone. What is important is to take the time to listen, to observe, and to build relationships with teachers. It is imperative for any new principal, especially one with a mandate to make changes to understand the existing culture *first*; that is, the norms, the belief systems, and its cast of characters before fixing any problems.

Finding Four: When changes are to be made, it is important for a new principal to have a coalition of support. Since sustainable change can only be achieved through a group effort and a shared vision, it is of utmost importance for a beginning principal to make an effort to bring more staff, including more of her teachers, on board and a majority of staff to recognize that change is indeed necessary.

Subsection D: Findings from Question Seven

Respondents were asked, “What are the most important elements of the middle school that you most want to preserve?” 35 out of 58 respondents answered this question. Using line-by-line coding, grounded theory, and the comparative contrast method, categories and codes were developed from teacher responses and are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Categories and Codes from the Teachers' Responses to Question Seven (N=35)

What are the most important elements of the middle school that you most want to preserve?	Response Count
<i>Clubs and sports</i>	N=2
"music" "arts" "sports"	
"Curriculum"	N=5
"art, music, and physical education should remain in the curriculum"	
"co-teaching models" develop challenging units "differentiated instruction" "enrichments"	
"Diversity"	N=1
"Job"	N=2
"Looping"	N=7
<i>No change</i>	N=7
"DO NOT BREAK UP THE TEAMS!" "Do not change anything." "friendships"	
"preserve the closeness" "preserving the great teachers and the teams"	
"not going to the high school"	
<i>No response</i>	N=1
"cannot answer the question"	
<i>Positive attitude, climate, and school culture</i>	N=12
"encouragement" "extended family" "fun and traditions" "joy felt between student and teacher" "positive outlook" "safe and trusting environment" "student safety" "supportive environment: "overall well-being (guidance, prevention)" "upbeat personalities among	

students and staff”

“*Professionalism*”

N=9

“academic integrity” “caring” “caring and dedication” “energy and dedication of many of the teachers” “excellent staff” “friendships” “great teachers” “supportive staff”

“teacher autonomy”

“*Student supports*”

N=7

“incredible guidance department” “SAT”

“*Teacher autonomy*”

N=1

“*Teaching the whole student*”

N=5

“awareness of student needs” “differentiated instruction”

“*Teams*”

N=12

“Do not change my team.” “extended family” “preserve team concept”

2 out of 35 respondents noted their jobs. Clearly, the times, in which this survey was administered, have influenced some teacher responses. It appears that teachers are concerned for their jobs because of the budget crisis.

12 out of 35 teachers noted two categories, *teams*, and *positive attitude, climate, and school culture* as important elements to maintain at HMS. This theme is reiterated in other findings, in which a majority of respondents perceived HMS to be “excellent,” and thus “not needing any change.” The category *positive attitude, climate, and culture* further contained codes such as “encouragement,” “extended family,” “joy,” “positive outlook,” “maintaining fun and traditions,” “safe and trusting environment,” “student safety,” “supportive environment,” “overall well-being,” and “upbeat personalities among students and staff.” It appears that many teachers perceive HMS to have a *positive culture and climate*.

9 out of 35 teachers remarked that *professionalism* was an important element to preserve at the middle school. Codes relating to this category included, “academic integrity,” “caring,” “caring and dedication,” “energy and dedication of many of the teachers,” “excellent staff,” “friendships,” “great teachers,” “supportive staff,” and “teacher autonomy.” Similar to the teacher responses from questions four and five, the majority of teachers perceive “HMS to be an excellent school with highly professional staff,” who are “caring” and extremely “dedicated to the welfare of all students.”

7 out of 35 teachers perceived *looping* and the *student supports* to be most important. 7 out of 35 teachers further made additional comments of not wanting to change. Responses from teachers included:

Keep everything the same. - TEACHER A

Do not change anything. - TEACHER B

The team, the school, not going up to the high school, the friendships in our school.

- TEACHER C

While one teacher did not have a response to this question, another teacher commented, “In these difficult times, teachers must be supportive of each other and not talk behind backs.”

Finding Five: A new principal may be entering a closely-knit community where the prevailing belief is that change is unnecessary. Charged with a mandate to make effective change, it will be of vital importance for the new principal to take the time to observe her teachers and be mindful of long-standing traditions and past practices. Because she will be an outsider entering into their community, positive change will most likely occur only when she is able to bring a substantial group of teachers to recognize that there is indeed a need for change.

Subsection E: Findings from Question Eight

Respondents were asked, “Describe the leadership that past principals have provided to the school.” 35 out of 58 respondents answered this question. Using line-by-line coding, grounded theory, and the comparative contrast method, categories and codes were developed from teacher responses and are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Categories and codes from the Teachers’ Responses to Question Eight (N=35)

Describe the leadership that past principals have provided to the school.	Response Count
<i>“Amicable and collegial”</i>	N=4
“appropriate and genuine relationships” “cared” “collegial” encouraged staff to “develop friendships”	
<i>“Authoritarian”</i>	N=2
“friction among staff”	
<i>Caring of students, staff, and community members</i>	N=5
Involved with students “liked a father figure” “listened”	
“teachers’ well-being first priority”	
<i>Delegatory</i>	N=7
“allowed teachers whom they trusted to ‘do their thing’ in the classroom” “chain on command” “delegated additional, specific roles to others” “delegated projects/tasks to people, whom they knew would get the job done with excellence” “did not need to know everything” “empowered staff” “trusting delegators” “trusted us”	

“Hands-off and “laid-back”

N=13

“allowed teachers whom they trusted to ‘do their thing’ in the classroom” “delegated additional, specific roles to others” “delegated projects/tasks to people, whom they knew would get the job done with excellence” “did not need to know everything” “didn’t want to cause problems with staff” “do their thing in the classroom” “gave us lots of freedoms” “let us do things without asking why” “minded their own business” “never came to my room”

“Hardworking”

N=1

“Innovative”

N=3

“leadership in technology” “SAT, Challenge Day, and Renaissance” supported student programs

“Laissez-faire”

N=1

“Let us be.”

“Micromanaged”

N=1

“Professional”

N=2

“Promoted positive school climate”

N=2

“encouraged staff to have fun, be collegial, develop friendships” “instilled trust in their staff”

Protector

N=7

“defend you in parental conflicts” “defended us when we made a mistake” “made us feel safe” “strong” “supported you with difficult students”

N=4

Respectful

“equally important and valued” “respected us”

Supporter

N=7

“listened” “support you with difficult students” “supported us”

“*Too laid-back and hands-off*”

N=5

“didn’t get any support or backing that made teaching easier during difficult times”

“never came to my room” not present or visible in the classroom

“too laid-back” “very hands-off”

“*Trusted us*”

N=13

“professional trust in us” “respectful and trusting” “sense of trust that I can do my job well” “trusted delegators” “trusted staff were professionals and allowed us to do our jobs” “trusted that we knew what we were doing, hardworking, and professional” “trusted us to do our own things”

4 out of 35 respondents did not respond to this question. These teachers are first or second year teachers, who have not worked under the previous administration.

The categories, *protector* and *supporter*, were grouped together into a larger category of *protective and supportive* because they shared similar codes. Codes such as “made you feel safe” and “protected” were often associated with being “supported.” As one teacher remarked, “I have only worked for two principals at HMS. Both were strong. Both would defend you in parental conflicts, and both would support you with difficult students.”

While 7 out of 35 respondents described the past leadership as *protective and supportive*, an equal number of respondents characterized the past leadership as *delegatory*. Past leaders “allowed teachers whom they trusted to ‘do their thing’ in the classroom.” Projects and tasks were delegated to “people, whom they knew who would get the job done.” According to this group of teachers, this style of leadership “empowered staff” and conveyed “a sense of trust.”

13 out of 35 noted that past principals were “hands-off” and “laid-back.” Additionally, 13 out of 35 teachers reported that previous administrators “trusted staff.” Based on teacher responses, it appeared that the theme *trust* had varying connotations depending on the teacher’s response. In spite of these slight differences, *trust* was often associated to the categories, *hands-off and laid-back, delegatory, and respect*. The following are some comments made by staff members:

[Past administrators were] laid-back. They trusted us. They let us do things without asking why. - TEACHER D

They did not come into our classrooms unless we asked. They respected us. - TEACHER E

Past principals were effective in their times and provided oversight and direction in a very laid-back, gentle manner . . . They were able to delegate projects/tasks to people, whom they knew who get the job done with excellence. - TEACHER F

Past Leaders that I have been involved with at this building allowed teachers to do their own thing and to be the professionals they are. They let us be and had professional trust in us.

- TEACHER G

Dave Rogers and John Brown trusted that staff were professionals and allowed us to do our jobs. They did not come into our classrooms or ask questions. They did not need to know what we did in our classrooms. They were very hands-off, and they trusted us. - TEACHER H

It appears that this group of teachers valued their autonomy and the “hands-off” approach of past administrators. These responses further indicate that teachers were given “much freedoms,” and tasks were being delegated to the appropriate people. It also appears that this group of teachers perceived their principals trusted and respected them when they were allowed “to do what [they] needed to do” without being “ask[ed] questions.” These principals had “minded their own business” and “did not feel the need to visit . . . classroom[s] unless . . . requested.” For this

group of teachers, it appears that the role of the principal was someone “who supported and respected staff, students, and community” by being “hands-off” and “involved with students” while knowing how to balance their involvement with students without encroaching upon the territories of teachers, their classrooms, and their teaching.

While 13 out of 35 respondents may have supported this style of leadership, 5 viewed this approach as being “too hands-off” and particularly sought more support in the areas of teaching and learning. Comments included:

Personally, I don't feel like I received much from the prior administration . . . I didn't get any support or backing that made teaching easier during difficult times. - TEACHER 1

I really did not see Dave my last year. He was very, very hands-off. I saw the junior vice principal more in my classroom. I know that the senior vice principal was in charge, but many of us went to the junior vice principal instead. - TEACHER 2

Dave Rogers was very hands-off, especially during his last year. In fact, he never came to my room to observe my teaching. He left it up to the junior vice principal. Dave seemed to stay out of sight, maybe because he knew it was his last year, and he didn't want to cause problems with staff. I actually like it when the present administration does walk-throughs and provides me with feedback about my teaching. - TEACHER 3

In the John Brown and Dave Rogers eras, the leadership allowed teachers, whom they trusted to ‘do their thing’ in the classroom. This worked out well for teachers, who understood their roles as educators and were ‘good’ teachers already, but it left those who truly desired to be ‘good’ teachers in the cold. Not enough support was given to those teachers to assist them in becoming better teachers. - TEACHER 4

Dave Rogers-was excited when he got the position but fizzled when he had health concerns.

Had to take two leaves of absence, so our building lacked leadership during these times.

- TEACHER 5

It is important to note that not one respondent commented on the theme of instructional leadership of the past administration. Further, some teachers perceived the role of an effective principal to be one, whose style of leadership should be more “hands-off” and “laid-back.” According to these respondents, the leader should know how to “delegate tasks” accordingly; “empower staff” to make their own decisions; “defend and support them” when teachers have made a mistake; and “protect them” from complaints from parents and from dealing with difficult students.

Further, while the majority of the respondents did not perceive a “need for change,” a small group of teachers were concerned about “maintaining the status quo” and recognized the “resistance to change” from the majority of the teachers. Other teachers indicated that the previous principal was not physically present, especially during his last year. It further appears that the two vice principals may have managed and led the school.

Finding Five: A new principal entering a school in Corrective Action Year 2 should recognize that what teachers perceive as vital for a successful entry might be in conflict with what she believes to be essential for the school. Therefore, before making any sudden changes, the new principal should spend time learning about what teachers perceive as important. Without obtaining this knowledge first, the new principal may make some grave mistakes upon her entry and potentially jeopardize her ability to be successful during her first year as principal.

Finding Six: In a culture that is resistant to change, it is important for the new principal to remember that there are no quick fixes. Even though the new principal is charged with the mandate to boost test scores, she must remember that change is a long, complicated, messy

process. Before the new principal can successfully implement change, she must spend significant time and effort on first cultivating an atmosphere among her teachers that is conducive to change and on winning over their support.

Finding Seven: Building this coalition of support will require that the new principal prepare both her teachers and her leadership team (i.e., her vice principals) for change. A new principal should remember that she might possibly be working with an existing administrative team that may share different norms and beliefs than hers. In such a case, the need for change may be a sensitive issue for those key members who played a significant role in shaping the existing school culture. Hence, care must be taken not alienate such team members, but to cultivate a shared belief and to make every effort to make them feel a part of the new endeavor. This is both a delicate and time-consuming process, but likely to be a wise investment for future successes. Hence, it is important for any new principal to remember that cultivating a shared vision with her fellow administrators is an essential first step and a key component in moving the school forward. A principal cannot lead alone. To move mountains, she will need a united front.

Part Four of Section Two: Summary of Major Findings from the On-Line Survey

Findings one and two shared similar themes and were regrouped into Major Finding Three. Six essential findings were found from the on-line survey and include the following:

Major Finding One: Even though the new principal may be working under the pressure of a mandate specifically to make AYP within a year, it is important not to fix everything all at once. This should especially be avoided in the beginning of a new job. Instead, the new principal should spend some time getting acquainted with her new surroundings. She should learn, listen, and observe the school and its culture. In order to shape and change the existing culture, the new principal will first need to deeply understand it.

Major Finding Two: A new principal should spend time developing relationships with as many teachers as possible because there may be different groups among the teacher body, who share varying beliefs and values, especially in a larger school. In making decisions, it will be important for her to understand their points of view and how they may interpret or react to her decisions and to change.

Major Finding Three: It is possible that a new principal may be entering a school where the majority of her teachers may not be ready for change or feel a need for change. To be successful in her first year, it will be vital for the new principal to prepare her teachers for change and to help them begin to visualize ways to become better for themselves and for the school.

Major Finding Four: To build a coalition of support, the new principal may further have to develop a shared vision with her fellow administrators. A new principal may be working with an existing leadership team that may have different norms and beliefs than hers. Hence, care must be taken not to alienate such team members, rather to cultivate a shared belief and to make every effort to make them feel a part of the new endeavor. It is important for any new principal to remember that she cannot lead alone. To move mountains, she will need a united front.

Major Finding Five: A new principal may be entering a closely-knit community where the prevailing belief is that change is unnecessary. Charged with a mandate to make effective change, it will be of vital importance for the new principal to take the time to observe her teachers and be mindful of long-standing traditions and past practices. Thus, positive change will take time and most likely occur only when she is able to bring a substantial group of teachers to recognize that there is indeed a need for change.

Major Finding Six: A new principal should be cognizant of the school that she will be entering and the composition of its staff. It is possible that teachers may not be as forthcoming to

her or as open to her new ideas. Therefore, it will be essential for the new principal to spend time developing relationships with all teachers, learning what they value and what (if any) they think needs to be changed. In this way, she demonstrates to her staff that she cares and listens to them and is respectful of the existing culture.

In the next section, data are analyzed from the researcher's journal entries and field notes to develop themes and findings.

Section Three: Findings from the Researcher's Journal Entries and Field Notes

Part One of Section Three: Categories from the Researcher's Journal Entries and Field Notes

Using line-by-line coding, grounded theory, and the constant comparative method, categories and codes were developed from the researcher's journal entries and field notes, and are presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Categories and Codes from the Researcher's Journal Entries and Field Notes Time

<i>"Hiring"</i>	July 1, 2007-
"hire personnel"	August 15, 2008
<i>"Making necessary changes"</i>	October 15, 2007-
"communication guidelines" "doing what is morally and ethically right"	January 1, 2008
"manifestation determination" "restriction list" "setting expectations"	
<i>"Planning"</i>	July 1, 2007-
"list the priorities and steps to be taken for both short and long term goals"	January 1, 2008
"reflect on goals with administrative team, mentor, school council, and team leaders" "seek feedback from teachers"	

<i>"Politics"</i>	July 1, 2007-
"determine how things really get done" "learn about the lay of the land"	January 1, 2008
"listen to and observe administration and teachers - their interactions with one another and with me" "reflect upon which teacher groups hold formal and informal power"	
<i>"Preparing"</i>	April 9, 2007
"analyze present and past MCAS scores" "ask questions about scheduling, team structure, and second math course" "ask the vice principals, the former principal, and central administration questions and reflect upon their responses" "examine the curriculum" "make a list of questions to ask and reflect upon whom to ask" "read and reflect upon written reports" "read policy books (i.e., student and faculty handbooks" "read union contracts" "review teacher and staff personnel files" "review budget" "study the school's and district's improvement plans, including the school's initiatives, mission, and vision statements"	July 1, 2007- August 24, 2007
<i>"Presence"</i>	April 2-3, 2007
"attend clubs and sport events sponsored by teachers" "attend teacher initiatives" "help to convey to teachers my expectations" "observe teachers in their classrooms" "Challenge Day" "Open House" "Opening Day" "reflect about presence and ask mentor how to be more present" "walk-throughs" "Welcome Back barbecue" "Welcome Back faculty letter" "what I value and believe in"	August 27, 2007- January 1, 2008
<i>"School culture"</i>	April 9, 2007

“bring old and new administrators on board” “build a shared vision with the administrative team and the department heads” “define clearer roles and job responsibilities” “develop more effective communication guidelines with teachers and administrative team” “learn about the school culture –its norms, its values, and cast of characters first” “take time to build relationships with administrators and teachers” “understand the purpose and role of various teacher committees”	July 1, 2007 - January 1, 2008
<i>“Setting expectations”</i>	April 2-3, 2007
“actions taken to inform teachers about my beliefs, values, and goals”	July 1, 2007-
“attend clubs and sport events sponsored by teachers” “Challenge Day”	January 1, 2008
“conflict of expectations due to change” “faculty meetings” “how I make decisions” “observe teachers in their classrooms” “Open House” “Opening Day” “present” “professional development days” reflect on my behavior”	
“walk-throughs” “Welcome Back barbecue” “Welcome Back faculty letter”	
“what I hope to achieve for the school” “what I say or do not say and where I spend my time” “what I value and believe in” “what teachers can expect from me”	
<i>“Support”</i>	July 1, 2007-
“manage and cope with stress” “support system”	January 1, 2008
<i>“Understanding change”</i>	July 1, 2007-
“addressing both the adaptive and technical aspects of leadership and change” “being judged constantly and tested as the new principal”	January 1, 2008
“becoming the legitimate leader, and not just the principal by title” “dealing	

with anger, fear, loss, and denial,” “dealing with the emotions involved with change” “human emotions of change”

Note. The italicized expressions are denoted as categories. Each category is then followed by the codes that are linked to it. Exact quotations from the researcher’s journal entries and field notes are encapsulated in quotation marks. The second column *Time* represents the duration of time, in which events took place.

As illustrated in Table 13, eight categories on entry were identified from the researcher’s journal entries and field notes. They include *preparing*, *hiring*, *planning*, *politics*, *understanding change*, *support*, *setting expectations*, and *school culture*. Categories and themes are discussed in detail, and findings are presented at the end of each section.

Part Two of Section Three: The Category Preparing

To begin with, a beginning principal will need to *prepare* for her school. From July 15 to August 15, the researcher “read policy books (i.e., student and faculty handbooks),” “stud[ied] the school’s and district’s improvement plans including the school’s initiatives, mission, and vision statements,” “analyze[d] present and past MCAS scores,” “examine[d] the curriculum,” and “reviewe[d] teacher and staff personnel files.”

As illustrated in her journal entries (i.e., August 27-31, 2007) once school begins, time will be limited, and the new principal will be immersed in numerous tasks.

Finding One: Taking the time to study the school (when there is an opportunity) is an invaluable first step to a successful entry. In particular, for a new principal charged with a mandate to turn around an underperforming school, it will be of utmost importance to use her time to compare and compile data on student performance and to be knowledgeable of all the school’s initiatives for improving student achievement.

Part Three of Section Three: The Category Hiring

As described in her earlier journal entries (i.e., July 6-16) one of the immediate tasks that a beginning principal may encounter be *hiring* school personnel, which may entail recruiting teachers at the last minute. On July 6, the principal wrote:

I just learned that we will have to hire two curriculum coordinators, one department head of guidance, and a department head of special education. All four positions are incredibly important to HMS. I must take the time to do this right even though I have no time. I will also need to hire an additional math teacher, and I will seek the assistance of my vice principal and curriculum coordinator of math 7-12. According to them, both the vice principal and the curriculum coordinator of math 7-12 shared with me that they did all of the hiring. Dave, the former principal, was not really involved with hiring teachers. He based his recommendations on the candidates from the decisions that the vice principals and the curriculum coordinator of math 7-12 had made.

On November 15, the principal noted:

K, the curriculum coordinator of math 7-12, just shared with me that there are continual complaints on M, the math teacher, who was just hired. Continual complaints come from students, parents, teachers, and even now the guidance counselors. (How are the guidance counselors involved? I need to ask my vice principals about past practices.) I asked K whether M was the best possible candidate. K responded, 'No. We just did not have anyone else.'

After reflecting on this situation, K and I both agreed that next time we should advertise for a long-term substitute until we find the best possible candidate.

The researcher learned that even though a new principal, who is still learning about the abilities and talents of her staff, may feel unprepared to take charge of the hiring of new teachers,

decisions about teaching and learning warrant her direct involvement. Especially, in this era of accountability, it is the principal who is held responsible for all student achievement.

The pressures are more heightened for a principal entering an underperforming school with a mandate to increase student performance. On November 16, the principal wrote:

In hindsight, I should have been more directly involved. Time was an issue, but coming in new, I did not want to ‘rock the boat.’ The vice principal shared with me that ‘this is how things are done.’ I was afraid of changing past practices too quickly and of its repercussions especially when I am just getting to know the vice principal and the curriculum coordinator of math 7-12. Both of these people are extremely knowledgeable and important. I will need their help to move this school forward. This will be a delicate dance considering how ‘hands-off’ the last principal appeared to be. I know that anything that I do will be seen as change. For some people, it may appear that I may not trust them because I am more involved than the past principal. This is hard – the politics of all of this. I must continue to see things from their perspectives while trying to move the people and this school forward. That includes my administrative team.

As a result of this, the principal and the curriculum coordinator of math 7-12 spent much time resolving many student and parent concerns, all of which could have been avoided in the first place.

Finding Two: A new principal entering in a school in Corrective Action Year 2 should remember that decisions regarding hiring must take time and thought. It should be an immediate priority. The extra time spent on tending to such important decisions will be a wise investment for the future. Hiring the right person for the job should not be a decision that is rushed even if the new principal feels pressed for time.

Part Four of Section Three: The Category Planning

Depending on the school and its particular situation, some new principals may spend a majority of the summer addressing unresolved issues from the past administration. For example, the principal wrote, “It is July 2, and I have just learned about three very serious issues involving students. Where did this come from? Why now? Why was this not handled earlier? I am just beginning.”

On July 15, the principal commented:

I have so much to do. So much to read, so much to learn, so much hiring. Apparently, these issues look like they were left behind, but the work has got to get done, and I am now the principal. So where do I begin, and what are the issues at hand? 1) I will need to fill those key positions. 2) I will need to learn more about the school. 3) I will need to develop relationships with my vice principals. 4) I will need to resolve these student and parent complaints. They take precedence, so I will have somehow put the others on the back burner. I will need to speak with my vice principals to get their advice and feedback. I do not know all of the district policies and procedures yet. I will definitely need some guidance and help, especially on these student issues. They sound serious and quite extensive. Students come first, so the rest will have to wait. I will need a plan of action and prioritize. It’s hard to believe – the second day on the job – so much already.

Finding Three: A new principal entering in a school in Corrective Action Year 2 must recognize that she cannot solve all her problems alone. When being confronted with several issues, it is important for the new principal to take the time to reflect, rather than to react immediately. Acting instinctively may potentially cause the principal to overlook some important perspectives that could lead to better results. While no principal has the ability to foretell the

future, having a well thought out plan and reflecting upon possible issues that may arise will help to reduce the new principal's stress and to increase the likelihood of moving her agenda along.

Finding Four: In developing her plan of action, it is important for the new principal to think about alternative scenarios, to prioritize them, and to map out her overall short and long term goals for achieving her vision. To implement this plan effectively requires that the principal have a deep knowledge about the school culture and be able to foresee possible sources for resistance. Hence, it is important for any new principal to spend much time in her entry learning by asking questions, listening, observing, and reflecting.

Part Five of Section Three: The Category Politics

It is important for the new principal to be politically astute so that her vision can be transformed into a viable plan. As journal entries July 5, October 10, October 15, October 17, October 18, October 19, and October 24 demonstrate, every aspect of the principal's work life involves politics.

On July 5, the principal recorded:

I just learned that the senior vice principal had applied to this job. The teachers at HMS wrote a letter of support to the superintendent. I must be sensitive of his feelings. He really wanted this job. At the same time, the junior vice principal did not apply for the job because he 'did not want teachers to be divided.' The junior vice principal shared with me that he had 'wanted to apply.' I bet that I am going to get a lot of resistance, especially if a vast majority of teachers wanted in the internal candidate. I am going to be watched, and I am going to have to prove myself. This is going to be hard and take a lot of work.

On October 10, the principal observed:

More teachers ask the junior vice principal for assistance than the senior vice principal. This

is interesting. Even though the teachers wanted the senior vice principal to be the ‘principal,’ it appears that there is a group of consistent teachers who go to the junior vice principal for advice. There also appears to be many groups of teachers in this school. Some teachers are clearly more aligned with the senior vice principal, while others appear to speak more freely to the junior vice principal. I learned that the junior vice principal went through this school system and had many of the veteran teachers as his instructors. He even went to school with some of the younger teachers.

On October 15, the principal wrote:

I have noticed some friction between the new administrators and the vice principals. S, one of the new administrators, stated, ‘There are many camps. People with tents, and marshmallows roasting.’ I will need to continue to work on developing my leadership team while building relationships with my teachers.

On October 17, the principal recorded:

There is so much to take in at one time. The new administrators (i.e., the new department heads and curriculum coordinators), the vice principals, and the teachers are all trying their best to adjust, to learn as much as they can, and as fast as they can while trying to learn one another’s styles and expectations. Some of the teachers, in particular, appear to be more receptive to change than others. Most teachers, however, appear to be used to a ‘hands-off’ and ‘laid-back approach,’ especially when it comes to the role of the new principal. This style of leadership directly conflicts with what I am supposed to do. I am supposed to build a more positive school culture and to improve test scores. Both tasks involve a more ‘hands-on’ than ‘hands-off’ style of leadership. This certainly will not be an easy task. I will need to seek the support of others. This will take a group effort and much work.

The principal on October 17 also noted:

At one point, there were sixteen initiatives in this school. How can this be with a ‘hands-off’ approach? I am confused. I need to learn more about what happened in the past. I will need to investigate if and how these initiatives are aligned to the school improvement plan and/or district goals. All I know is that the teachers cannot focus on all of this. This is too much for anyone to digest, much less implement successfully. I will change only what needs to be changed. Most of my time will be spent on learning as much as I can about the school, its existing culture, and developing relationships with people. There is so much to learn.

On October 18, the principal recorded:

Another situation just arose. Three of the new administrators (i.e., the department head of guidance, the department head of special education, and the curriculum coordinator of English 7-12) are having some difficulty with the teachers. I have spoken to the district curriculum coordinator to get his assistance and feedback. I am grateful to have the support of my superintendent who understands the enormity of this job and all of the tasks that will eventually need to be accomplished. I am grateful to have a mentor, who reflects with me and provides me with often a different viewpoint.

Even with these supports, there is so much to do on this job and so much to learn at the same time. I constantly check in with my mentor (and occasionally my superintendent) to share with them decisions that I will need to make. As the newbie, I know that I will be constantly watched and judged by others. What I do, say, and how I act will be important if I am to survive my first year as principal.

On October 19, the principal noted:

Today, four teachers came to me in my office about one of the new administrators. They all

pointed out that ‘When M was the curriculum coordinator of English 7-12, he did not act like this. He did things differently.’

One of the teachers stated, ‘Can you believe that H, the new curriculum coordinator of English 7-12, made a remark about A’s (the teacher’s) room! She was very unprofessional, and that comment was uncalled for.’

Another teacher commented, ‘Thank you for listening to us. We did not know where else to turn. We know that you will listen to us. We are all master teachers here, very professional. We are just not treated as such.’

I asked them if they had spoken to her, and I also asked for specific examples. They replied that they had not spoken to her.

One teacher stated, ‘I have nothing more to do or say to her.’

The principal on October 19 also recorded the following:

These teachers were clearly upset and were very critical of H, the new curriculum coordinator of English 7-12. They were in particular upset at having to write common assessments.

(Perhaps, H had not shared with her department why she had asked the teachers to work on these common assessments.) One of them asked if she could write a letter to the superintendent, expressing their concerns. They shared with me that all of them had already written a letter of complaint to her, and all teachers had signed their names to that letter.

In the meeting on October 19, I just listened. I asked clarifying questions to understand the situation and to validate the teachers’ feelings. At the end of our meeting, I told the teachers that I would speak to H directly and share their concerns with her. I told them that I would attend the next department meeting, but I would speak with H first.

While three of them nodded their heads in agreement, one of them commented, ‘Aren’t

you the principal?’

I responded to her, ‘Yes, but respectfully, I would like to check in with H first because she may have other plans for her next department meeting. Just as I have shared with all staff that I am doing walk-throughs in classrooms, I would like her to know that I am coming to the department meeting.’ In watching her body language, this teacher appeared to understand.

This was not an easy meeting. The teachers were very upset. One of them started to cry in the meeting. I will need to speak with H, the curriculum coordinator of English 7-12, about this meeting. I will need to process my next moves with my mentor and the district curriculum coordinator, especially since they have already written a letter of complaint to the new department head and given it to her. I know that how I handle this situation and its eventual outcome will also reflect on me.

On October 24, the principal wrote:

It appears that the way in which I handled the situation is starting to open lines of communication. H thanked me for my help. According to H, ‘it will take time, but we will get there. I appreciate what you did.’

I also checked with the four teachers. They thanked me for listening to them and stated that things are getting slowly better. One teacher stated, ‘Things are now out in the open. We wanted you to know.’

The abovementioned journal entries present many vital findings for beginning principals. While each environment that a new principal enters is unique and presents itself with its own set of challenges and problems, it is important for a new principal entering a school in Corrective Action Year 2 to bear the following in mind:

Finding Five: A new principal should recognize that various groups exist within the school staff. She should take the time to learn about the lay of the land, to identify those teachers who are likely to be supporters, opponents, and those who are potentially sitting on the fence, and to determine how things really get done within the school and within the district office.

Finding Six: A new principal must remember that she cannot solve all of her problems alone. She must engage her fellow administrators and teachers in the decision-making process, and seek the feedback and advice of district personnel (when appropriate). When confronted with several issues, it is important for the new principal to take the time to reflect on the situation, to think about alternative scenarios, and to define a plan of action, rather than react immediately.

Finding Seven: A new principal should not try to fix everything at once, especially in the beginning. Changes should be made only when essential and necessary. A new principal should further be cognizant of how many initiatives and changes have been put into place. In the beginning of her principalship, it is important for the new principal to remember that less is more as much as of her time is spent on learning about the school and its existing culture.

Finding Eight: A new principal should continue to build a coalition of support. She should cultivate relationships with as many teachers as possible, asking teachers for feedback on what they value, and on what they perceive should be changed. Equally important for the new principal is to understand the interpersonal relationships among members of the administrative team. A new principal may be entering a school where the vice principals played a significant role in managing and leading the school.

As the newcomer, it is possible that the vice principals and some teachers may feel uneasy with this change. Both groups may feel discontent toward the principal as they may perceive some of her actions as a change in authority and a loss of their power. Left unaddressed, such

feelings may lead to a much more complex and thorny situation. Therefore, it will be invaluable for the new principal to devote time to building a trusting relationship with her vice principals. She should learn more about their responsibilities and their roles, and use their strengths to help make positive changes on behalf of students and teachers. To do so will take time, a specialized set of interpersonal skills, hard work, and a great deal of patience.

Part Six of Section Three: The Category of Understanding Change

In addition to being an astute politician, a new principal entering in a school in Corrective Action Year 2 should have a concrete understanding of change theory and what change entails.

On October 18, the principal wrote:

I realize that to gain acceptance and validation as the “real leader” in this building, I will have to prove myself. I will have to consistently model my core values, be transparent in what I think and believe, and communicate my actions and beliefs to others, especially to my teachers and to my leadership team.

On October 24, the principal recorded:

The situation with H, the new curriculum coordinator of English 7-12, and her teachers only reaffirmed that change involves addressing the human emotions related to change, such as fear, anger, denial, and loss. H and I spent a lot of time talking about how the teachers in her department appeared to be disgruntled and unhappy. They were not used to talking about data and using data to assess student work. These teachers did not want to develop and use common assessments. It was clear that the teachers did not want to change their practices. They were used to M, the former curriculum coordinator of English 7-12 head, and his style of leadership, which was more ‘hands-off’ and ‘delegatory.’ M had allowed the teachers to ‘do more of their own thing’ with regard to tests, quizzes, and assessments. According to H,

the teachers felt and believed that the initiative to develop common assessments stifled their creativity as professionals.

On December 3, the principal wrote:

This is hard stuff. I feel so alone at times. I must remind myself that the process of change is complicated, time-consuming, and messy. Because change involves people, I must continue to foster relationships with my teachers and build my leadership team so that I can develop a common vision and help others envision ways to become better.

The aforementioned journal entries present many essential findings for first year principals. Therefore, for a new principal entering in a school in Corrective Action Year 2, it is important to note the following:

Finding Nine: While each school presents its own set of problems and unique challenges, a new principal should have deep knowledge of the process of change. She should have a clear understanding of what a school vision is and both the technical and interpersonal skills to lead her school and staff toward creating positive change. To lead this type of change may possibly require the new principal to address the human emotions associated with change, such as fear, anger, denial, and loss as well as to spend significant time and effort on first winning over support and achieving an atmosphere among staff that is conducive to change.

Finding Ten: It is important for the new principal to remember that initiating, leading, and managing complex change requires much perseverance, courage, and focus from her and of her. As an outsider attempting to gain acceptance and validation as the legitimate leader of the school, she must remember that trust and respect are qualities that must be earned. While she may hold the nominal title of principal, it is initially only that – a title. Therefore, she must continue to be transparent in her core values, communicate them to her constituents, and model

professional behavior. As the new kid on the block, she will be judged by her actions, words, and behaviors. She will be continuously tested. At times, she will feel quite lonely and stressed.

Part Seven of Section Three: The Category of Support

As evidenced in the previous section, the first year principalship is “challenging, hard, and at times quite lonely.” It is important for the new principal to have both a support system and learn how to manage and cope with stress effectively. In this case study, the principal was fortunate to have an extremely caring superintendent, an experienced mentor, and a sage professor who gave her guidance, insight, and reassurance while performing her job. On October 18, the principal wrote:

I am very fortunate to have these three people in my life who care about me and are truly invested in my well-being and in making sure that I do a good job. Knowing that I can rely on them when matters become extremely tough is so helpful, especially when this job is so enormous and I feel at times quite lonely.

On October 6, the principal wrote, “I am glad to get away from Hope today. I needed that break so that I can process some more. It was really nice to take a drive to the city.”

Finding Eleven: Because the principal’s job can be “stressful” and at times “quite lonely,” it is important, especially for a beginning principal, to spend some time unwinding so that she can do a more effective job. At the same time, it is vital for any beginning principal to have a support system with people whom she trusts so that when difficult issues and challenges arise, she can express her feelings openly and ask for their opinions, knowing that they have her best interest and that of her school’s at heart.

Part Eight of Section Three: The Category of Setting Expectations, Presence, and Making Necessary Changes

This part contains two subsections: 1) *setting expectations and presence*; and 2) *setting expectations and making necessary changes*. The researcher first describes the regrouping of *presence* with *setting expectations*, and then articulates her reasons for placing *making necessary changes* with *setting expectations*. Major themes and lessons are presented in both subsections.

Subsection A: Setting Expectation and Presence

Presence was regrouped with the category of *setting expectations* because they shared similar codes, such as “attend clubs and sports events sponsored by teachers,” “attend teacher initiatives,” and “help to convey to teachers my expectations.” On April 2-3, 2007, the principal recorded:

I attended Challenge Day because I wanted to show teachers and students that I support their anti-bullying initiative. I believe it is important that students feel safe and are respected.

Teachers later thanked me for participating in this event, even those who did not participate in the event. I was surprised that so many teachers noticed.

From this experience as well as others, the researcher learned that “what a new principal says or does not say” and “how and on what she chooses to spend her time” are invaluable, informal ways to communicate to teachers what she values and believes in. Further, the principal wanted to attend Challenge Day. She “wanted to show teachers and students...[her] support” and that their anti-bullying initiative was a priority for her.

The researcher also learned that as the newcomer teachers would like to know “what are the new principal’s priorities.” Activities, such as “clubs and sport events sponsored by teachers,” “Welcome back faculty letter” “Open House,” “Welcome Back barbecue,” “faculty meetings,”

“walk-throughs,” and “observations of teachers” can help the new principal communicate her expectations to her teachers. For example, on August 24 the principal noted:

My vice principals and I will present for Opening Day, which is the first faculty meeting of the year. In the past, I learned that Dave Rogers, the former principal, did administrative topics during Opening Day. According to the two vice principals, the teachers were not happy about this. They further thought that Dave’s past faculty meetings on Opening Day were too long. Teachers were more interested in getting back to their classrooms to set up for their new students for the following day.

In listening and planning with my vice principals, we decided to keep the first faculty meeting or Opening Day for the faculty short and to the point. We would not focus on administrative items, rather we decided focus on two catch phrases, which were also the two vision statements for HMS: 1) high standards of teaching and learning, and 2) welcomed and valued. The two vice principals and I also processed these ideas with my mentor, who thought that our first faculty meeting was well planned. Our goal was to show teachers that faculty meetings will be focused on teaching and learning and not on administrative topics.

Also, in listening to teachers and the vice principals, I know that teachers wanted to know more about me and what to expect from me. Thus, in processing with my vice principals and my mentor, we decided that I should end Opening Day and tell teachers what I value and what they can expect from me. (I will tell teachers that I value respect as well as academic excellence. I will share with teachers that they can expect from me that I will listen, that I truly care for them and about teaching and learning, and I will work extremely hard for our students and for them.)

Above all, I will remember to keep Opening Day short, recognizing that this first faculty

meeting is symbolic and very important. I want teachers to recognize that I listen to them and to their needs. After attending the district Opening Day event, I am sure that teachers will not want to attend a long faculty meeting with their new principal. They will want to get back to their rooms and get ready for their students tomorrow.

On August 27, 2007, the principal observed:

Many teachers thanked me for keeping Opening Day short. Three teachers shared with me that they appreciated the fact that the meeting was limited to mundane issues, rather it had some substance. It was focused on teaching and learning and on the school's visions statements.

As one teacher stated, 'Not having administrative items was great. Putting them on a handout was more helpful than reading them out loud as was done in the past.'

Another teacher commented, 'The last statement was helpful in knowing what we can expect from you.'

Furthermore, on December 7, the principal recorded:

A teacher thanked me for doing a walk-through and participating in the science activity. She wrote me an email and thanked me for participating in her class. She also invited me to future activities. In the email, she expressed her gratitude for caring about her class and the activity on the rockets. She also thanked me for noticing the objectives written on her board. She told me that it was clear that I care about teaching and learning, and helping teachers to become better in their work.

Finding Twelve: A new principal entering in a school in Corrective Action Year 2 should recognize the power of symbols and their meanings. She should take the time to observe and be mindful of long-standing traditions because they can be used to help convey to teachers the new

principal's values and beliefs, and lay the groundwork for establishing the new principal's expectations, priorities, and goals.

Finding Thirteen: It is vital for a new principal to be conscious of her actions and words, as well as her presence or lack of presence to certain events because *what a new principal say or does not say* and *how and on what she chooses to spend her time* can informally communicate to teachers not only her beliefs and values but also her priorities and goals.

Subsection B: Setting Expectations and Making Necessary Changes

First year principals may be faced with the challenge of making decisions that are both difficult and complex because they conflict with the school's norms and past practices.

On October 15, the principal wrote:

S, the new department head of special education, informed me that four students on 504's and IEP's were suspended past the ten days without a manifestation determination. She asked for help. She had already spoken to the prevention specialists and the vice principals. In spite of this, they continue to suspend students on 504 plans and IEP's past the ten days.

On October 18, the principal wrote:

My leadership team and I came together to study this discipline case. S, the new department chair of special education, presented literature to all of us, and shared with us pertinent laws. We reviewed the student handbook. We also spent some time discussing the steps that needed to be put in place to ensure that students with disabilities are not suspended past the appropriate number of days. S was extremely helpful and informed us of specific, relevant laws. However, when S was speaking, some members of the administrative team was rolling their eyeballs and making faces. I will have to address them privately asking them why they were behaving in such a manner when S was speaking.

I will consult with my mentor and speak to the district coordinator of special education on deciphering the best approach for handling this situation. I noticed that some members of the administrative team continue to give S a hard time for bringing this important matter to my attention. This is so hard on S too.

Finding Fourteen: A new principal entering a school in Corrective Action should recognize that conflicts will inevitably arise when decisions are made that go against the norm or past practices. This situation becomes even more challenging when it involves members of the administrative team. In such a case, the new principal should seek the advice of district personnel. Tapping into their experiences may be helpful in addressing such an issue.

Regardless of the situation, a new principal must always be guided by her undeterred belief of doing what is in the best interest of students, instead of doing what is easy or popular. By making this choice, the new principal is setting her expectations, and demonstrating to teachers, administrators, and other staff members what she values and believes in. As the leader of the building, it is her ethical duty to do what is morally and legally right on behalf of all students.

Part Nine of Section Three: The Category of School Culture

Before any principal can make changes, she must spend time learning about the school and its culture. In this case study, the principal spent her first couple of months of her entry listening, observing, and asking teachers and administrators questions.

On April 9, the principal wrote:

My conversation with the former principal was extremely helpful. I learned that teachers have experienced many initiatives over a relatively short time frame. I can only imagine how difficult all of these changes must be for them. Now, they will be getting a new principal after having Dave Rogers, the former principal, for many years. I bet this change will be difficult

for a great deal of teachers.

On September 5, the principal stated:

Many teachers refer to themselves as ‘caring,’ ‘hardworking,’ ‘dedicated,’ and ‘professional.’ This is interesting and possibly may suggest that teachers do not feel a need for change. Based on my previous conversations with the former principal and the vice principals, this may indeed be the case. While there may be resistance to change, these teachers may also see me as an outsider.

On September 10, the principal wrote, “A teacher shared with me that we have many talented, master teachers.”

On September 21, the principal wrote, “There appear to be different factions among the faculty, especially when teachers talk about their teams. There even appear to be some divisions and camps among some of the administrators.”

On October 1, the principal wrote:

Three teachers shared with me the many changes that HMS has undergone, such as the changes made to scheduling; the development of a second math class; and the creation of curriculum maps, a standards-based curriculum, and common assessments, all of which had occurred within the past two years. It appears that these teachers are ‘tired of changes’ and just would like to have ‘some stability.’

From these experiences, the principal learned three important aspects about the school and its culture. First, many of the teachers appear to resist change: they do not want to change. Second, there appears to be different factions among the teacher body and administration. Third, teachers have experienced many changes within a relatively short time period, and are “tired of changes” and would like to have “some stability.”

These journal entries highlight important findings for beginning principals. Therefore, for a new principal who has been charged with the immediate task of making changes, it is important to note the following:

Finding Fifteen: Before making any immediate or sudden changes, a new principal should spend time learning about the school and its culture and developing relationships. By doing so first, the new principal demonstrates to her staff that she listens and cares about what her teachers and administrators think and value. She is not there to change everything. Rather, her task is to help school members visualize ways for achieving excellence.

Finding Sixteen: As the newcomer, the new principal should spend additional time cultivating a trusting relationship with her administrators and building her leadership team. The administrative team's support is vital for moving the school forward.

Finding Seventeen: In moving the school and its members toward achieving excellence, the new principal must remember to strike a balance between making changes on the most pressing issues while at the same time maintaining a sense of stability and continuity. She should focus her energies and efforts on only a small number of essential tasks, rather than fixing everything at once. This will be especially important during her first year, as she is learning about the lay of the land and determining how things really get done.

Part Ten of Section Three: Summary of Major Findings from the Researcher's Journal Entries and Field Notes

Some of the aforementioned findings were regrouped into one larger finding as they shared similar themes. Overall, thirteen essential findings were found from the researcher's journal entries and field notes, and include the following:

Major Finding One: A new principal should take the time to study the school, to compare and compile data on student performance, and to be knowledgeable of all the school's initiatives for improving student achievement. It is important for any new principal to spend much time in her entry learning by asking questions, listening, observing, and reflecting.

Major Finding Two: A new principal must recognize that she cannot solve all her problems alone. When being confronted with several issues, it is important for her to take the time to reflect, rather than to react immediately. She must engage her fellow administrators and teachers in the decision-making process, and seek the feedback and advice of district personnel (when appropriate). Acting instinctively may potentially cause the principal to overlook some important perspectives that could lead to better results.

Major Finding Three: A new principal should not try to fix everything at once, especially in the beginning. Changes should be made only when essential and necessary. In the beginning of her principalship, focusing on less is more.

Major Finding Four: Decisions regarding hiring must take time and thought. It should be an immediate priority for any new principal. The extra time spent on hiring the most qualified person for the job will be a wise investment for the future.

Major Finding Five: A new principal should recognize that various groups exist within the school staff. She should take the time to learn about the lay of the land, to identify those teachers who are likely to be supporters, opponents, and those who are potentially sitting on the fence, and to determine how things really get done within the school and the district office.

Major Finding Six: A new principal should continue to build a coalition of support. She should cultivate relationships with as many teachers as possible, asking teachers for feedback on what they value, and on what they perceive should be changed. Equally important for the new

principal is to spend time cultivating a trusting relationship with her administrators and building her leadership team. The administrative team's support is vital for moving the school forward.

Major Finding Seven: In developing her plan of action, it is important for the new principal to think about alternative scenarios, to prioritize them, and to map out her overall short and long term goals for achieving her vision. To implement this plan effectively requires that the principal have a deep knowledge about the school culture and be able to foresee possible sources for resistance.

Major Finding Eight: A new principal should have deep knowledge of the process of change. She should have a clear understanding of what a school vision is, as well as the technical and interpersonal skills to lead her school and staff toward achieving positive change.

Major Finding Nine: The new principal should remember that initiating, leading, and managing complex change requires much perseverance, courage, and focus from her and of her. As an outsider attempting to gain acceptance and validation as the legitimate leader of the school, trust and respect must be earned.

Major Finding Ten: A new principal should have a support system with people whom she trusts so that when difficult issues and challenges arise, she can express her feelings openly and ask for their opinions, knowing that they have her best interest and that of her school's at heart.

Major Finding Eleven: A new principal should recognize the power of symbols and their meanings. She should take the time to observe and be mindful of long-standing traditions because they can be used to help convey to teachers the new principal's values and beliefs, and lay the groundwork for establishing the new principal's expectations, priorities, and goals.

Major Finding Twelve: A new principal should be conscious of her actions and words, as well as her presence or lack of presence to certain events because *what a new principal says or*

does not say and how and on what she chooses to spend her time can informally communicate to teachers not only her beliefs and values but also her priorities and goals.

Major Finding Thirteen: A new principal must always be guided by her undeterred belief of doing what is in the best interest of students, instead of doing what is easy or popular.

In the next section, data are analyzed from a review of documents to develop themes and findings.

Section Four: Findings from a Review of Documents

From the collection of her school documents, the researcher chose to present three that are most relevant to her research question. All four helped to provide the researcher with a key understanding of the school. They include 1) the School Climate report (N, 2004); 2) documents on curriculum and former initiatives; and 3) the restriction policy.

Part One of Section Four: Findings from the School Climate Report

In 2003-2004, when the two middle schools merged, much work was done to achieve a smooth transition (N, 2004). After the formation of HMS in its present form, a two-part study was conducted to measure the climate of the school and the progress on achieving HMS's seven vision statements, which include 1) social and academic safety; 2) physical and emotional safety; 3) effective communication; 4) high standards for learning and teaching; 5) all parents, students, and staff feel welcome and valued; 6) fun, joy, and awe; and 7) consistent policies. N, the data specialist for the district, was commissioned to conduct a study and write a report on the state of the school with respect to these goals.

In part one of N's (2004) study, 25 students were observed for a period of one week in order to depict a typical day at HMS. Students were further asked to provide a written description of both positive and negative behaviors occurring in the classroom. In the second half of this report,

a survey was administered to teachers, parents, and students in April and May of 2005. 48 teachers (69 percent) completed the survey. 598 parents (56 percent) and 728 students (68 percent) did the same.

Major findings from both parts of the study are presented below.

In the observational study, typical examples of positive responses included teachers making comments, such as “good job” and “good” to students; and students “doing [their] work” and “listening . . . to [their] teachers” (N, 2004, p. 5). Typical examples of negative responses consisted of teachers telling students to “shut up” and “using words like crap,” “teachers getting mad at students”; students “passing notes and laughing,” and “not doing their work”; and “people laughing at something that someone said that makes no sense” (N, 2004, p. 5).

Based on these comments and student observations, N (2004) found:

1. Two cultures existed in the school: the student peer culture and the teaching-learning culture.
2. Students and teachers had different perspectives on what respect means.
3. The constant tension between the student peer culture and the teaching-learning culture controlled the student’s school day and impacted student learning in the classroom.
4. The social and academic environment was sometimes “not calm and relaxed [and] a comfortable place to learn” (N, 2004, p. 18) for students.

However, N (2004) also reported:

Once in a while [when] the student peer culture and the teaching-learning culture [were] in-sync, these would be those magical moments in a classroom when ‘learning [was] happening’ . . . Respectful action [was] in control of both the student peer culture and the teaching-learning culture.” (p. 9)

At this crucial moment when both teachers and students felt respected simultaneously, N (2004) found that six out of the seven vision statements (i.e., social and academic safety; physical and emotional safety; effective communication; high standards for learning and teaching; all parents, students, and staff feeling welcome and valued; and fun, joy, and awe) were being fulfilled. According to N (2004), it would be unlikely for students to observe the seventh vision statement, consistent policies and procedures.

In the second part of her study, N (2004) found that 30% of the school community (i.e., teachers, parents, and students) were also concerned about the level of support and encouragement given to students, as well as the level of physical and emotional safety provided to them. This finding “seem[ed] to support those found from her observational research” (N, 2004, p. 18), which indicated that the social and academic environment was sometimes “not calm and relaxed, [and] a comfortable place to learn” (N, 2004, p. 18).

Additionally, N’s (2004) report indicated that there were differences in how teachers, parents, and students responded to each question and how they perceived the climate and culture of HMS. For example, when asked whether students’ ideas, thoughts, and participation in class activities are encouraged and respected, 72% of teachers felt responded *most of the time*, while 55% of parents and 50% of students indicated *most of the time* (N, 2004).

When asked whether HMS shows respect for all students and families regardless of race, ethnicity, religious preference, or gender, 60% of the teachers answered *most of the time*, while 50% of parents and 40% of students indicated *most of the time* (N, 2004).

When asked whether students feel like it is an emotionally safe place to be, 60% of the teachers answered *most of the time*. 50% of parents and 42% of students indicated *most of the time* (N, 2004).

When asked whether students feel physically safe and secure in HMS while on school property, 68% of teachers indicated *most of the time*. 39% of parents and 40% of student answered *most of the time* (N, 2004).

When asked whether the HMS community expects all students to meet high standards, 60% of the teachers answered *most of the time*. 48% of parents and 42% of students responded *most of the time* (N, 2004).

These results show that teachers, parents, and student have different perceptions in how they perceive the climate and culture of HMS. Across the board, a higher percentage of teachers than parents or students gave good marks to the school on issues pertaining to positive culture.

Further, when teachers were asked what percentage of parents are involved in supporting their child's educational efforts, a majority of teachers believed that only 45 percent of all parents "appeared to provide sufficient support for their child's educational efforts" (N, 2004, p. 15). N (2004) also pointed out, "The teachers were even more critical of parental support than were the students" (p. 15). In summary, N (2004) noted, "As is usually the case, it is easier to blame another group in the community for any community failings than to blame members of one's own group" (p. 18).

Finally, 30% of teachers felt welcome and valued only *some of the time*, while 50% of the teachers felt appreciated only *some of the time*. These results "suggested a level of dissatisfaction by teachers of their work environment" (N, 2004, p. 19).

Overall, N's (2004) report found:

1. More work needs to be accomplished in the area of creating a more positive school culture even though it was reported that much work had already been accomplished for planning a smooth transition for HMS.

2. Differences in perceptions about the state of the school appear to exist between teacher, parent, and student groups.
3. Students do not appear to have optimal conditions for learning all the time.
4. A group of teachers feel dissatisfied and not appreciated.

The findings from N's (2004) report contradict some of the findings from the researcher's on-line survey and paints a different picture of HMS than the one stated by the majority of respondents from the researcher's on-line survey. According to the researcher's on-line study, more than 70% of all the teacher respondents perceived HMS to be an excellent school. All 36 responses or 100% of all respondents indicated that the strength of HMS lies in its highly qualified and professional staff. Thus, the researcher found from her on-line study that many respondents did not see a need for change. (See Subsection B: Findings from Question Five and Subsection C: Findings from Question Six for more detailed information.)

Finding One: A beginning principal entering a school in Corrective Action Year 2 should learn about the school and its culture from multiple perspectives. A new principal may be entering in a school where the majority of teachers may not perceive a need for change when the reality may be much different than their own perceptions. Faced with dilemma of implementing change when the majority of her teachers may not see a need for change will be an issue that the new principal will need to address.

Thus, before any new principal can bring people together and begin to help them envision ways to become better, she must first understand them, their values, and beliefs. Reading past studies about the school and its culture is an important step in gaining a deeper insight about the school and its existing culture. Reports such as these further provide a new principal with a clearer sense of direction and help to identify what her priorities and goals should be.

Part Two of Section Four: Findings from Documents on Curriculum and Former Initiatives

Next, the researcher examined a series of documents (i.e., curriculum maps, schedules, faculty agendas, Opening Day slides and handouts, and the school improvement plan) to learn more about the school, in particular, its curriculum and initiatives.

From the review of documents, the researcher found that teachers experienced many changes. Many of these changes were initiated because of the school's failure to make AYP. From 2003 to 2005, HMS did not make AYP in English and math in its subgroups, which placed HMS in Corrective Action Year 1. In 2005, HMS did not make AYP in math in the aggregate.

As a result, there was a sense of urgency to improve student achievement immediately, and teachers worked hard to align the curriculum with state standards. In 2005, English and math teachers (followed by science and social studies teachers) began to develop curriculum maps and a scope and sequence for each map. Prior to this, there was a lack of consistency in what teachers taught and when they taught a particular subject area or topic.

According the 2006-2007 school improvement plan, teachers were introduced to standards-based units, differentiated teaching, and common assessments. They were expected to create and to implement the new curriculum within two years. It appears that teachers were rushed to meet this deadline and may not have been given an opportunity to understand the purpose and goal for creating a standards-based curriculum. For many teachers who were used to having much autonomy and freedom over their curriculum and how they taught it, it may have been difficult to adjust to a more uniform curriculum and greater oversight over of teaching practices.

Further, from 2004 to 2006, there were 14 initiatives that were introduced and implemented. Many of them occurred simultaneously and did not last long. In an effort to sustain all of these initiatives, several committees were formed, on which many teachers served. The Wellness

Committee, Diversity Committee, Safety Committee, and Communication Committee were created to help monitor the progress toward achieving all seven vision statements. While in the beginning these committees were well attended, as newer initiatives were introduced, they lost their momentum. These committees dissolved, and along with it, the hard work of teachers.

In summary, a review of documents indicates that teachers faced many challenges and changes, all within a relatively short time frame. Although great effort was made to bring about a smooth transition for teachers, from analyzing these documents, the research found that teachers did not have the time and the opportunity to acclimate to their new surroundings and to adjust to all of the changes.

Finding Two: A new principal entering a school in Corrective Action Year 2 should study past documents on curriculum and former initiatives. Acquiring more knowledge about the school, its culture, and past programs will help the new principal develop a greater understanding of what seems to be working well and of potential issues that she may need to address.

Part Three of Section Four: Findings from the Restriction Policy

Finally, the researcher examined the restriction policy to learn more about the school, its culture, and its norms.

From a review of documents (student handbooks, notes from the HMS school council, and agendas for Opening Day), it appears that there may be divisive culture at HMS - one that clearly identifies and labels “good students” and “bad ones.” For example, for over 35 years, the concept of a restriction policy has existed in HMS. Before the two schools merged, both middle schools shared a similar philosophy. They believed that students with “poor behaviors and poor grades” (X, 2002, p. 9) should be excluded from school activities.

In 1974, the restriction policy stated:

A student is placed on the restricted list when he/she fails two or more subjects or received a poor conduct grade in two or more classes. When on the restricted list a student is not allowed to participate in any extra-curricular activities for that marking period until improvement is shown. A student does remain a member of an athletic or cheerleading team and is allowed to practice with the team during this period but cannot represent the school during competition. This policy was formulated and implemented by the students and faculty with the cooperation of the Administration. (p. 10)

It appears that many teachers and administrators believed that this policy was helping students improve both academically and behaviorally. According to their belief, if a student were performing poorly in his academic work, then barring him from participating in activities, such as sports, chorus, or music would provide him with “ample opportunity and assistance to improve” (X, 1979, p. 11). The student “doing poor academic work” (X, 2006, p. 6) would then be able to seek additional guidance and help from his teachers as well as spend more time studying for quizzes and doing homework. Teachers and administrators also believed that the restricted list provided students who behaved inappropriately with “an element of motivation to improve his/her conduct” (X, 1979, p. 11). Therefore, it appears that many teachers and administrators believed that the intent of the restriction policy was not to punish or exclude students, rather it was intended to help students become more responsible and accountable for their own actions and behaviors.

From 1989 to 2006 additional components were added to the restriction policy. It appears that teachers and administrators believed that students needed more rules and regulations in order to perform better academically and to behave more appropriately.

Therefore, from 1989 to 2005, another guideline was added to the restriction policy: if a student “receive[d] one ‘F’ in the same subject for two or more marking periods in a row” (X, 1989, p. 18), he was also placed on the academic restriction list.

In response to NCLB and its mandate for increased accountability, teachers and administrators believed that students should also be held more accountable. They needed to learn how to be more responsible for their own actions, behaviors, and for their own achievement. In 2005-2006, Dave Rogers, the vice principals, and the teacher leaders noticed an increase in the number of students who were failing, behaving inappropriately, and arriving late to school and to their classes. Added to this was the school’s failure to make AYP in English and math for three consecutive years. The school was now in Corrective Action Year 1. Concerned about making AYP and about the number of students being absent and tardy, several strategies were put into place to fix these problems. One of the strategies included adding an attendance and tardy component to the restriction policy. Although an attendance and tardy policy already existed for students, the teachers and administrators felt that stricter guidelines needed to be put into place to address these issues. They believed that these new guidelines would help teach students how to be more responsible for their actions.

Therefore, in 2006, the restriction policy stated that if a student received any one of the following: two “D’s” or one “F”; an “unsatisfactory behavior” in two or more subjects; an “unsatisfactory effort” comments in two or more subjects; two or more discipline referrals during any marking period; five or more absences in a single marking period, or eight or more unexcused tardies in a single marking period, then that student would be placed on the restricted list and excluded from the following activities:

1. Sports – No tryouts. No practices. No games.

2. Band and Chorus – No after school practices, no after school concerts. No performances/field trips that require the student to miss a class during the school day.
3. Leadership Council – Removal from program.
4. No after school social functions – dances, sports events, Renaissance Faire, etc.
5. Peer Mediation
6. Other reward events such as the student-faculty basketball game.
7. The administration will have the discretionary power to add names to the conduct-restricted list. Students on Academic Restriction will be provided the opportunity to get extra help in the subjects they are failing.
8. Students will be placed on the restricted list during the 1st marking period of their 8th grade year based on their performance during the 4th marking period of their 7th grade year. (p. 6)

Under these new guidelines, students were placed on the restricted list at either the midterm or the end of the term. Further, if students were placed on the restricted list during midterm, then they remained on the list until the end of that marking period. The restriction policy was posted in every classroom. On Opening Day, August 30, 2006, Dave Rogers and the two vice principals reviewed the restriction policy with new and returning students.

In 2006-2007, over 300 students or one-third of all students attending HMS were placed on the restricted list. To reduce the number of students on the list, administration revised the policy in Spring 2007.

1. Students with two “D’s” were no longer placed on the restricted list. Students with one or more “F’s” during midterm or the end of the term would now be placed on the list.

2. Students with five or more unexcused absences by the end of the first marking period were no longer placed on the restricted list. Students accumulating five or more unexcused absences by the end of the second marking period and fifteen or more by the end of the third marking period would now be placed on the restriction list. (p. 6)

The rest of the policy, however, remained the same. Students doing poorly on academics and those who behaved inappropriately were addressed similarly and restricted from activities.

Further, when a student misbehaved, he would receive a referral, meet with prevention specialist, and receive a disciplinary consequence. After serving his detention or deemed consequence, he could still be placed on the restriction list. Therefore, any student who received two referrals during midterm or during any marking period would in essence be “punished” twice. He would serve his appropriate consequence and also be barred from other activities for an entire marking period.

During the first year at HMS, the new principal studied the restriction list. In the second term, she learned that 206 students were placed on the restricted list. 181 students or 88% were placed because of their grades: they had received one or more “F’s” during midterm or the end of the term. Further, she learned that 51% of the students were students on free and reduced lunch. 26% of the students were students on individualized education plans.

Additionally, in 2007-2008, there were approximately a total of 39 African-American students who attended HMS. 16 out of the 39 African-American students who attended HMS were placed on the restricted list because of their grades. Also, in HMS there were a total of 39 students, for whom English is a second language. 12 out of these 39 students were placed on the restriction list: 10 for their grades, and 2 for their attendance.

In essence, the principal learned that this policy excluded many students of color, those on individualized education plans, students on free and reduced lunch, and those for whom English is a second language from participating in activities and social events. The policy and its practice were discriminatory against those students but also inconsistent from the school's vision statement of welcome and valued. Yet, it had existed for many years because many teachers and former administrators believed by enforcing the restriction policy, they were teaching students how to be more responsible and accountable for their actions. It should be noted that the restriction policy was removed because the principal felt that its existence was inequitable and discriminatory toward certain groups of students. However, it would take the new principal one year, and a very long, involved process with teachers and administrators to remove this policy that had been so entrenched in the school and its culture.

Similar to themes found in N's (2004) report and in the researcher's on-line survey, the principal found many teachers to be set in their ways and resistant to change. (See Part One of Section Four: Findings from the School Climate Report and Subsection A: Findings from Question Four respectively for more details.)

Finding Three: A new principal may be entering an environment where teachers and possibly some of her administrators may not share her beliefs or perceive a need for change, especially when an existing belief or practice has been embedded in the culture for a long time. Before making any immediate changes, it would be wise for the new principal to develop a well thought out plan and to anticipate possible reactions. This requires that the new principal spend time learning about the culture, its norms, its values, and cast of characters. Therefore, while learning more about the school and its cast of characters, it will be important for the new principal to be mindful of her own actions, words, and behaviors. Although she may disagree

with some of the existing practices as in the example of the restriction policy, it will be important for the new principal to understand why this norm and/or practice may have existed. As the leader of the school, the new principal must remember that her ultimate goal is to help all people envision ways to reach higher ground and to attain excellence. To do so will require that the new principal to be more reflective about the situation instead of being judgmental toward her staff. Finally, in helping her staff to move closer to their vision, the new principal's decisions and her choices must always be guided by doing what is legally and ethically right on behalf of students, rather than what is easy or popular.

Part Four of Section Three: Summary of Major Findings from the Review of Documents

Overall, three major findings were found from the review of documents and include the following:

Major Finding One: A beginning principal should spend her entry learning as much as she can about the school and its people, especially in the first couple of months. Reading past studies about the school and its culture as well as analyzing past documents on curriculum and former initiatives. will help the new principal gain the necessary knowledge and insight to develop a well thought out plan and to anticipate possible issues that may arise. Therefore, before a new principal can bring people together and begin to help them envision ways to become better, she must first understand them, their values, and their beliefs.

Major Finding Two: While learning more about the culture and developing relationships with people, the new principal should be mindful of her own actions, words, and behaviors. Although the new principal may disagree with some of the existing practices, it will be important for her to understand their points of view, to be more observant and reflective, rather than judgmental.

Major Finding Three: A new principal must always keep in mind that her ultimate goal is to begin to help people envision ways to reach higher ground and to attain excellence.

The next section highlights the major findings from chapter four and consolidates any findings in sections two, three, and four, that were repetitive and overlapping.

Section Five: Summary of Major Findings from Chapter Four

Overall, twenty-seven major findings were found from the researcher's on-line survey, her journal entries and field notes, and a review of documents. They include the following:

1. A new principal should take the time to study the school when there is opportunity, such as in the summer. As an invaluable first step, a new principal must learn as much as she can about the school and its existing culture. Insights from studies on the school and its culture can help a new principal gain more information about the school and its existing practices and norms.
2. During the first few months on the job, a new principal should continue to spend time *learning* by asking questions, listening, observing, and reflecting. The new principal should take the time to study the school, to compare and compile data on student performance, and to be knowledgeable of all the school's initiatives for improving student achievement.
3. A new principal should be cognizant of the school that she will be entering and spend time learning about the composition of the staff and its different groups. Different groups of teachers may have varying viewpoints about the school and what they value as most important. To move the school forward, she must develop a power base and understand what people think as well as how they may react to change.

4. A new principal should continue to build a coalition of support. She should cultivate relationships with as many teachers as possible, asking teachers for feedback on what they value, and on what they perceive should be changed. Equally important for the new principal is to spend time cultivating a trusting relationship with her administrators and building her leadership team. The administrative team's support is vital for moving the school forward.
5. A new principal must recognize that at the time of her entry, she is the leader of the school by title only. A new principal must gain acceptance and validation from her teachers to become the legitimate leader of the school. Respect and trust must be earned, all of which will take time.
6. While learning more about the culture and developing relationships with people, the new principal should be mindful of her own actions, words, and behaviors. Although the new principal may disagree with some of the existing practices, it will be important for her to understand and be respectful of their points of view, to be more observant and reflective, rather than judgmental.
7. A new principal should be mindful of rituals and long-standing traditions that teachers cherish and value.
8. A new principal should recognize the power of symbols and their meanings because they can help convey to teachers the new principal's values and beliefs, and lay the groundwork for establishing the new principal's expectations, priorities, and goals.
9. A new principal should spend time learning the lay of the land; identifying those teachers who are likely to be supporters of initiatives, opponents, and those who are potentially

sitting on the fence; and determining how things really get done within the school and the district office.

10. A new principal must take the time to understand the interpersonal relationships among members of the administrative team. Possibly, the new principal may be working with administrators who applied for the principalship position and who continue to play a significant role in managing and leading the school. It will be of utmost importance for the new principal to immediately dignify these individuals and to use their strengths to help make positive changes on behalf of students and teachers.
11. A new principal should understand that her mere presence is perceived as a change to the status quo.
12. A new principal should recognize that change is a long, complicated, and messy process. Change takes time and requires winning a critical mass of support from staff members for it to last and endure.
13. A new principal should have deep knowledge and understanding of the process of change. She should have a clear understanding of what a school vision is, as well as the technical and interpersonal skills to lead her school and staff toward achieving positive change. This set of skills includes understanding how to manage and to lead the process of change while at the same time knowing how to address the human emotions associated with change, such as fear, anger, denial, and loss.
14. A new principal should recognize that teachers are at different stages in the change process. While some teachers may perceive a need for change, others may be resistant or more reluctant to change. It is important for the new principal to first understand where people are in the process, and then to begin to lay the groundwork for change. To do so

will take time, a specialized set of interpersonal skills, hard work, flexibility, and a great deal of patience.

15. A new principal should not try to fix everything at once, especially in the beginning.

Changes should be made only when essential and necessary. A new principal should be cognizant of how many initiatives and changes have been put into place. In the beginning of her principalship, less is more.

16. When a new principal is being confronted with several issues, it is important for her to take the time to reflect, rather than to react on impulse, and to prioritize her goals.

17. A new principal should spend much time and thought on decisions regarding hiring.

18. A new principal must recognize that she cannot solve all the problems alone. She must engage her fellow administrators and teachers in the decision-making process, and seek the feedback and advice from district personnel (when appropriate).

19. A new principal must recognize that conflicts will arise when decisions are made that go against the norm or past practices. In making decisions, the new principal must be guided by her undeterred belief of doing what is right on behalf of the students, rather than doing what is easy or popular.

20. A new principal may feel stressed, lonely, and isolated at times. She must learn how to cope with and manage stress effectively, and how to seek support from individuals whom she trusts.

21. A new principal must be transparent in her beliefs and values, consistent in her actions and words, and model professionalism.

22. A new principal must be clear when communicating her expectations, priorities, and goals to her teachers.

23. A new principal should be conscious of her actions and words, as well as what her presence or lack of presence in certain events conveys. *What a new principal says or does not say*; and *how* and *on what she chooses to spend her time* can informally communicate to teachers not only her beliefs and values but also her priorities and goals.
24. A new principal must help her teachers and administrators visualize ways for achieving excellence for their school and for them.
25. A new principal must be politically astute so that her vision can be transformed into a viable plan of action.
26. In developing a plan of action, a new principal should think about alternative scenarios, prioritize them, and map out her overall short and long term goals for achieving her vision.
27. A new principal should continue to monitor and evaluate her progress, never losing sight of the school's vision for excellence.

It is the researcher's hope that these findings will assist a beginning principal in achieving a successful entry when entering a school in Corrective Action.

Conclusion

In summary, initial codes, categories, and themes were developed from analyzing data from three sources: 1) the on-line survey; 2) the researcher's journal entries and field notes; and 3) a review of relevant documents. From each source of data, codes, categories, and themes were further developed, and direct quotations were used to substantiate the development of themes. At the end of each section, major findings from each data source were listed. In the end, twenty-seven major findings were found and presented within the context of the research question. Discussions of the study's findings and implications of research are presented in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

Foreward

Chapter five, the final chapter, discusses the study's findings in light of the existing literature, details the implications of the study, and proposes some avenues for future research.

Comprised of five sections, this chapter is organized as follows:

The introduction provides a brief examination of the study and restates the research question.

Section one summarizes the major findings of the study.

In section two, the researcher offers her perspective and the lessons learned on how to bring about effective administrator entry for a first year principal entering a school in Corrective Action. In particular, this section discusses the findings and compares them to the key themes identified in the professional literature on administrator entry and first year principals from chapter two. Composed of two parts, part one examines the researcher's findings and explains how they relate to and enhance findings from notable studies on professional and organizational socialization of first year principals. Part two then discusses the researcher's findings within the context of existing studies and lessons on effective administrator entry.

Implications for practice are discussed in section three.

Possible limitations, related to the researcher and the researcher design, are described in section four.

Avenues for further research are explored in section five.

Finally, chapter five and the researcher's study end with the conclusion.

Introduction to Chapter Five

The study examined the demands that a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action faces and explored what is most important for a first year principal to know and to be mindful of in order to be successful. The study further identified what a first year principal's immediate priorities should be when entering the job and examined potential pitfalls. As the researcher was also a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action, she used her experiences as a frame of reference to explore the aforementioned topics. Hence, the goal of this study was not to offer a critique of the researcher's entry but to learn more about the expectations for creating a successful entry for a beginning principal in this particular context and to identify the keys for success.

While the perspectives of students, parents, administrators, and community members are just as vital and necessary in learning how to create a successful entry, the scope of this study focused on the teacher's perspective as a point of reference. Thus, the research question for this study was:

What factors do middle school teachers perceive as vital for creating a successful entry for a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action?

Section One: Summary of Major Findings from the Researcher's Study

As a result, twenty-seven major findings were found from the researcher's on-line survey, her journal entries and field notes, and a review of documents. They consist of the following:

1. A new principal should take the time to study the school when there is opportunity, such as in the summer. As an invaluable first step, a new principal must learn as much as she can about the school and its existing culture. Insights from studies on the school and its

culture can help a new principal gain more information about the school and its existing practices and norms.

2. During the first few months on the job, a new principal should continue to spend time *learning* by asking questions, listening, observing, and reflecting. The new principal should take the time to study the school, to compare and compile data on student performance, and to be knowledgeable of all the school's initiatives for improving student achievement.
3. A new principal should be cognizant of the school that she will be entering and spend time learning about the composition of the staff and its different groups. Different groups of teachers may have varying viewpoints about the school and what they value as most important. To move the school forward, she must develop a power base and understand what people think as well as how they may react to change.
4. A new principal should continue to build a coalition of support. She should cultivate relationships with as many teachers as possible, asking teachers for feedback on what they value, and on what they perceive should be changed. Equally important for the new principal is to spend time cultivating a trusting relationship with her administrators and building her leadership team. The administrative team's support is vital for moving the school forward.
5. A new principal must recognize that at the time of her entry, she is the leader of the school by title only. A new principal must gain acceptance and validation from her teachers to become the legitimate leader of the school. Respect and trust must be earned, all of which will take time.

6. While learning more about the culture and developing relationships with people, the new principal should be mindful of her own actions, words, and behaviors. Although the new principal may disagree with some of the existing practices, it will be important for her to understand and be respectful of their points of view, to be more observant and reflective, rather than judgmental.
7. A new principal should be mindful of rituals and long-standing traditions that teachers cherish and value.
8. A new principal should recognize the power of symbols and their meanings because they can help convey to teachers the new principal's values and beliefs, and lay the groundwork for establishing the new principal's expectations, priorities, and goals.
9. A new principal should spend time learning the lay of the land; identifying those teachers who are likely to be supporters of initiatives, opponents, and those who are potentially sitting on the fence; and determining how things really get done within the school and the district office.
10. A new principal must take the time to understand the interpersonal relationships among members of the administrative team. Possibly, the new principal may be working with administrators who applied for the principalship position and who continue to play a significant role in managing and leading the school. It will be of utmost importance for the new principal to immediately dignify these individuals and to use their strengths to help make positive changes on behalf of students and teachers.
11. A new principal should understand that her mere presence is perceived as a change to the status quo.

12. A new principal should recognize that change is a long, complicated, and messy process.

Change takes time and requires winning a critical mass of support from staff members for it to last and endure.

13. A new principal should have deep knowledge and understanding of the process of change. She should have a clear understanding of what a school vision is, as well as the technical and interpersonal skills to lead her school and staff toward achieving positive change. This set of skills includes understanding how to manage and to lead the process of change while at the same time knowing how to address the human emotions associated with change, such as fear, anger, denial, and loss.

14. A new principal should recognize that teachers are at different stages in the change process. While some teachers may perceive a need for change, others may be resistant or more reluctant to change. It is important for the new principal to first understand where people are in the process, and then to begin to lay the groundwork for change. To do so will take time, a specialized set of interpersonal skills, hard work, flexibility, and a great deal of patience.

15. A new principal should not try to fix everything at once, especially in the beginning.

Changes should be made only when essential and necessary. A new principal should be cognizant of how many initiatives and changes have been put into place. In the beginning of her principalship, less is more.

16. When a new principal is being confronted with several issues, it is important for her to take the time to reflect, rather than to react on impulse, and to prioritize her goals.

17. A new principal should spend much time and thought on decisions regarding hiring.

18. A new principal must recognize that she cannot solve all the problems alone. She must engage her fellow administrators and teachers in the decision-making process, and seek the feedback and advice from district personnel (when appropriate).
19. A new principal must recognize that conflicts will arise when decisions are made that go against the norm or past practices. In making decisions, the new principal must be guided by her undeterred belief of doing what is right on behalf of the students, rather than doing what is easy or popular.
20. A new principal may feel stressed, lonely, and isolated at times. She must learn how to cope with and manage stress effectively, and how to seek support from individuals whom she trusts.
21. A new principal must be transparent in her beliefs and values, consistent in her actions and words, and model professionalism.
22. A new principal must be clear when communicating her expectations, priorities, and goals to her teachers.
23. A new principal should be conscious of her actions and words, as well as what her presence or lack of presence in certain events conveys. *What a new principal says or does not say*; and *how* and *on what she chooses to spend her time* can informally communicate to teachers not only her beliefs and values but also her priorities and goals.
24. A new principal must help her teachers and administrators visualize ways for achieving excellence for their school and for them.
25. A new principal must be politically astute so that her vision can be transformed into a viable plan of action.

26. In developing a plan of action, a new principal should think about alternative scenarios, prioritize them, and map out her overall short and long term goals for achieving her vision.

27. A new principal should continue to monitor and evaluate her progress, never losing sight of the school's vision for excellence.

It is the researcher's hope that these findings will assist a beginning principal in achieving a successful entry when entering a school in Corrective Action.

In the next section, the researcher compares her findings to the key themes of the professional literature on administrator entry and first year principals, as reviewed in chapter two.

Section Two: Discussions of the Researcher's Findings

Part One of Section Two: Comparisons of the Researcher's Findings to Studies on Professional and Organizational Socialization Studies on First Year Principals

The researcher found that for a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action, much of the learning occurred on the job. This concurs with the research of Duke (1987), Duke et al. (1984), Hart (1987, 1993), Parkay et al. (1992), and Parkay and Hall (1992), who found that "learning on the job" is an integral part of principal socialization. In fact, Duke et al. (1984) found that the professional socialization of new principals begins with anticipatory socialization, moves through entry in the principalship, and concludes with a period of metamorphosis. For many first year principals, this transformation does not take place until the end of the new principal's first year when they no longer feel like rookies. Duke et al. (1984) and Parkay et al. (1992) further reported that the induction period can be of varying length.

The researcher found in her case study that professional socialization was a much longer process for the new principal. As noted in the study, much of the new principal's time during the

entry phrase, especially during the first few months on the job, was spent on *learning* by asking questions, listening, observing, and reflecting. Further, the principal's *learning* started in the summer months before students or teachers had arrived to school and extended toward the end of the principal's first year. It appears that for a new principal entering in a school in Corrective Action, the induction period may be prolonged, as much of the time will be spent learning about the job while on the job.

The researcher also found that the new principal spent time learning how to become the legitimate leader of the school, while at the same time learning the necessary skills to perform the job well. This finding concurs with Hart's (1991, 1993) research on socialization research on beginning principals. Hart (1991, 1993) found that professional and organizational socialization occurred simultaneously for new principals during their induction period. Unlike seasoned principals, who have accumulated knowledge helpful to their particular job settings from previous work, first-time principals must acquire the necessary skills to perform the job effectively, while at the same time mastering the social roles that help them gain access to legitimacy and validation in their given settings (Hart, 1993; Merton, 1968).

Additionally, the researcher found that having the ability to accomplish both tasks and to do them well requires time, hard work, a great deal of patience, and a specialized set of interpersonal skills from the new principal. The researcher also found that a new principal must have deep knowledge and understanding of the process of change, a clear understanding of what a school vision is, as well as the technical and interpersonal skills to lead her school and staff toward achieving positive change. Therefore, the researcher believes that possessing these skills and having this knowledge base are important attributes for a first year principal wishing to

achieve a successful entry in a school in Corrective Action. Such an arena may not be a good fit for *every* beginning principal.

The researcher also found that having a support system, such as an assigned mentor, was invaluable and necessary for the new principal's learning and to her socialization as a new principal. In particular, the researcher found that having a mentor who was experienced in the profession and knowledgeable about her school and its culture was most helpful in reflecting on and processing through issues that the new principal had not experienced in her previous training as a vice principal or in her practicum. This finding is in agreement with the research of Duke (1987) and Duke et al. (1984), who reported that often the socialization experiences of the novice principals were intense, short, and informal. Only four of the 45 principals involved in Duke et al.'s study had received any formal orientation by employing districts. Many of the principals perceived their first year experiences as more invaluable to their "survival" than their training in their formal courses and preparation programs. Adding to Duke's (1987) and Duke et al.'s findings, the researcher believes that for a first year principal to be successful in a school in Corrective Action, she must be afforded with the supports and opportunities to complete her training.

Further, the researcher found that a new principal must learn how to cope and manage stress effectively to be successful in her job. This finding concurs with the research of Duke (1987), Duke et al. (1984), and Daresh (1993). According to Duke (1987) and Duke et al., the principal's expectations of their first principalships and what they actually experienced were different. Feelings of unpreparedness, loneliness, and anxiety due to time constraints made for a challenging first year for these novice principals. Daresh (1986a, 1986b, 1993) in his studies on first year principals reported that "novice principals experience a profound sense of isolation

from peers as they move into their roles; . . . often lack confidence, even when they possess great competence to do their jobs; . . . and typically describe their roles as times filled with anxiety, frustration, and self-doubt” (Daresh, 1993, p. 3).

Concurring with these findings, the researcher found that in her case study, the first year principal was often confronted with many issues and all at once. The new principal felt stressed, lonely, and isolated at times. Because of this, the new principal sought the emotional support from individuals whom she trusted. The researcher found that the new principal must learn how to take care of herself physically, emotionally, professionally, and spiritually as the job demands a lot from the individual. Therefore, the researcher believes that for a new principal in a school in Corrective Action to be successful in her first year, she must recognize that many cumbersome tasks and some difficult situations lie ahead. Knowing this, she must learn how to manage and cope with stress effectively as part of her socialization process as a new principal, and she will further need a support system to rely on.

Additionally, the researcher found that conflicts will arise for a new principal when decisions are made that go against the norm or past practices. This finding adds to Hart’s (1991) research that “organizational socialization in subsequent assignments may instill values and norms that differ markedly from those learned during professional socialization. Organizational socialization quickly overpowers professional socialization if the two conflict” (p. 452). Therefore, if the first year principal is to succeed in changing aspects of a social or cultural system, then the new principal “must be well acquainted with the system, knowledgeable but not blinded by unexamined underlying assumptions and values” (Greenfield, 1985a, p. 111).

Concurring with both Greenfield’s (1985a) and Hart’s (1991) findings, the researcher found that when a new principal makes decisions, she must be guided by her undeterred belief of doing

what is right on behalf of the students, rather than doing what is easy or popular. Similar to their findings, the researcher found that to act on the system from within the system, a new principal in a school in Corrective Action must first gain access to and validation from those who control the system. Therefore, the researcher believes that a new principal must take the time to discover how to fit into the existing group (i.e., organizational socialization), while at the same time learn how to “remain different and distinct . . . [in order] to contribute creatively to the growth and development of the school” (Hart, 1993, p. 3), which as Hart (1993) identifies, is the essence of leadership succession.

In the next section, the researcher explores her findings within the context of existing studies and lessons on effective administrator entry.

Part Two of Section Two: Comparisons of the Researcher’s Findings to Existing Studies and Lessons on Effective Administrator Entry

The researcher found that a new principal entering a school in Corrective Action should be attentive to the “descriptive culture” before shaping the “prescriptive culture.” Concurring with the findings of Jentz et al. (1982) and King and Blumer (2000), the researcher found that in her case study, the new principal spent time observing the culture and asking teachers what they thought and how they felt. Therefore, the researcher believes that for a new principal learning about “the attitudes and norms of the community and its people” (Jentz et al., 1982, p. 17) are essential components for creating a successful entry.

The researcher further found that a new principal in a school in Corrective Action should be attentive to the various groups who exist within the school and recognize that teachers and possibly some members of her administrative team may not share the belief that there is a need for change. Thus, the researcher found that teachers and even her administrators may be resistant

to any initiative that brings about change. Depending on the context and the situation, a new principal may need to spend substantial time preparing her staff for change. Therefore, the researcher found that the new principal must spend time reading the culture of the school before making any changes. This finding is in agreement with Jenzt et al. (1982) and King and Blumer (2000), who strongly suggest to first year principals to embrace their confusion by learning about the “ ‘descriptive culture’ of the system – its values, behavioral norms and cast of characters” (King & Blumer, 2000, p. 357) during their entry. According to King and Blumer (2000), “school leaders must try to see things as they are and begin to help people visualize ways in which they can be better” (p. 357).

The researcher also found that a new principal should avoid the temptation to tackle everything at once even if she has been given a mandate to make specific changes. Rather, the new principal should take the time to reflect on issues than react to them. This finding concurs with King and Blumer (2000)’s research that cautions first year principals “to avoid committing two cardinal sins: trying to fix things that are not broken and breaking things that seem to be working well” (p. 357).

Finally, a first year principal must remember that at the time of her entry, she is the leader of the school by title only. As King and Blumer (2000) so poignantly state “what . . . [new principals] do and how they conduct themselves during the critical entry or ‘honeymoon’ phase sets the stage for how their relationships will evolve and how effectively they will be able to lead in the years to come” (p. 360). This finding will be of particular importance for a new principal entering a school in Corrective Action. In such a setting, the principal’s leadership will be put to major tests, and the new principal will need the support of her teachers and her administrative team to move the school forward. As the researcher found, trust, respect, and credibility are

qualities that must be earned, and the new principal must continuously demonstrate her character and her competence to lead by reflecting on her own actions, words, and behaviors, as well as modeling professionalism to her staff. This process will take hard work, time, and perseverance.

In the next section, the researcher describes how her findings can be implemented into practice.

Section Three: Implications for Practice

The following is a survival kit for first year principals entering a school in Corrective Action, which will help them identify and avoid some common pitfalls. It is the hope of the researcher that the lessons offered will help beginning principals achieve a successful entry.

When considering whether or not to apply for a job in a particular site, it will be important for the potential candidate to reflect on her own experiences, training, and skill sets to determine if the school, its location, and its expectations are best suited for her. For example, where does the candidate envision herself in the next couple of years? Does the candidate believe that she has the capability to turn around a school within a short time frame? Does she feel that she has deep knowledge and understanding of the process of change, as well as the technical and interpersonal skills to lead a school and its staff toward achieving positive change? Therefore, when considering a principalship in a school in Corrective Action, the candidate should reflect on whether, at this point in her career, she has the interpersonal skills and necessary experiences to lead and manage others successfully in such an environment. She may want to reflect with a professor or a colleague whom she trusts before preparing for or committing to interviews.

In case the potential candidate finds the challenges and rewards for working in a school in Corrective Action appealing to her, then it would be a good idea to pursue a practicum in a school facing such circumstances. Of particular benefit would be for the candidate to shadow an

experienced and successful principal in a school in Corrective Action. Although each school is unique with its own set challenges and issues, observing the day-to-day work life and demands of a seasoned principal in such a setting would offer an invaluable real-life experience and would undoubtedly assist the potential candidate in preparing for her future job. She would gain a greater understanding of what skill sets and experiences are necessary to lead and to be successful in such an arena.

Before accepting the job, the candidate should inquire about the types of supports offered to the new principal. For example, will the new principal be offered a mentor? Should the new principal have the opportunity to request her mentor, having a seasoned principal who is knowledgeable about the school and the district is preferable. Again, in choosing her mentor, the principal should speak with her superintendent to learn specifically what role the mentor will serve and how often the new principal will be able to work with her mentor.

Once accepting the job in a school in Corrective Action, it would be prudent for the new principal to arrive early, if possible, and to spend the summer months preparing for the job before the school year begins. Once school officially starts, the new principal will surely be inundated with issues to address and be limited in her time and ability to immerse herself in studying and preparing for the job. The new principal should spend allow herself ample time to learn about the district, the school, and its existing culture.

To begin with, the principal should meet with central administration. It will be important for the new principal to understand what the superintendent expects of her during her first year. The new principal should also meet with other district personnel, such as the district curriculum coordinator, the director of pupil services, and the director of special education to inquire how they view her school and what issues they perceive will need to be addressed at her school. It

will be important for the new principal to establish relationships with district personnel, to seek their advice when appropriate, and to learn how best to keep them informed of relevant school matters.

Furthermore, insights from studies on the school and its culture can help a new principal gain more information about the school and its existing practices and norms. Reading teacher files, comparing and compiling data on student performance; and being knowledgeable of all the school's initiatives for improving student achievement will be important information for the new principal to have and to know.

During the first few months on the job, the new principal should continue to spend time *learning* by asking questions, listening, observing, and reflecting. It is important for the new principal to realize that her first year is one of personal learning. Until the new principal has gained credibility from her staff, it will be better for the new principal to avoid fixing everything at once and to keep her opinions to herself, especially as she is learning the lay of the land.

In learning the school culture, the new principal should assess it carefully before strategizing on how to change it. She should meet with every teacher and department head, asking them for feedback on what they value and on what they perceive should be changed. The new principal should remember to respect the past, being mindful of rituals and long-standing traditions that teachers cherish and value. In learning the school culture or its history, the new principal should ask the secretary for information and always treat her as a professional.

A new principal should spend time observing the lay of the land, locating the sources of power, and bringing them into her circle of influence. She should identify the patterns of communication and who speaks to whom, and determine how things really get done within the school and district office. In locating the power, she should bring those with power, such as the

different groups of teachers and those individuals who applied for her job into her sphere of influence. She should seek their advice, and assign them leadership roles. It is better to keep influential and powerful people on her team than to have them plot against her.

Equally important for the new principal is to spend time developing a trusting relationship with her administrators and building her leadership team. She should learn the relative strengths (and weaknesses) of her fellow members on the school leadership team. Since the new principal cannot solve all of the problems by herself, she will need to rely on her leadership team in moving the school forward. Thus, learning the relative strengths of the various members will greatly assist in delegating responsibilities and tasks wisely.

As there will likely be apprehension until the new principal earns her trust, respect, and credibility from her teachers, the new principal should take a proactive approach and engage her teacher body in an ongoing open dialogue. It will be important for the new principal to be transparent in her beliefs and values; consistent in her actions and words; and model professionalism. The new principal should pick her battles wisely since not every issue needs to be addressed. The important ones will resurface a second and third time. Therefore, prioritizing is key.

Once the new principal has solicited the opinions and views of all her teachers on the current state of the school; that is, its strengths and what they think as issues to improve, it will be important for the new principal to reflect back on their viewpoints at a faculty meeting. At the same time, the new principal should communicate clearly to teachers what the non-negotiables are for her administration. She should continue to fight for those values, being mindful of her own actions, words, and behaviors. *What a new principal says or does not say; and how and on what she chooses to spend her time* can informally communicate to teachers not only her beliefs

and values but also her priorities and goals. Therefore, it is important for the new principal to define problems within the context of the existing school values so that the teachers will have the opportunity to resolve the issue and to begin to understand that the new principal truly respects their culture and listens to them.

With the steep learning curve and the multiple demands of this job, it is important that the new principal remember to take care of herself physically, emotionally, professionally, and spiritually. She should exercise; eat well; rest; have fun with friends; and spend some time reflecting on her leadership. In seeking support, it will also be helpful for the new principal to find another principal in the district who can help to lead her through the minefields, as her appointed mentor may or may not fill this role.

Finally, it is important for the new principal to remember that change is a process and a human endeavor. To move the school forward, the new principal must develop a power base and understand what people think as well as how they may react to change. This requires a deep understanding of the process of change. Therefore, in spite of her mandate to boost test scores immediately, the new principal in a school in Corrective Action must remember that as a first year principal, her most important goal is to establish her trust and credibility. In a successful entry, this process begins by learning about the existing culture – its norms, values, and its people. In and through this process of cultivating relationships, and validating others and their points of view, an effective leader begins to help the school and the people within it envision ways to become better and to grow in profound ways.

While findings from the study will hopefully offer beginning principals with pertinent and valuable information, it is important to note that, as with all studies, there are limitations. The limitations of this study are described in the next section.

Section Four: Limitations of the Study

Data collector bias was a limitation, as the researcher was directly involved in this study. This bias could have influenced the objectivity of data-gathering and analysis. To reduce this bias and ensure the study's validity, the researcher kept thorough records, followed methods meticulously, and most importantly acknowledged her subjectivity in chapter three.

Possible loss of subjects was another limitation. While all 78 teachers were asked to participate in the anonymous on-line survey voluntarily, not all teachers chose to participate. It is possible that those teachers who did not participate may have responded differently than the participants from which data were collected. Therefore, the researcher documented both the total size of the sample, along with the overall percentage of returns from the survey as well as the percentage of total responses for each item. Findings from the on-line survey question were based on a sample of 58 respondents, with more than half of all respondents completing the entire survey.

Finally, the ability to generalize findings from a single case study was a limitation. This study looked narrowly at how teachers in a specific school in Corrective Action perceive a first year principal as creating a successful entry. The findings cannot be generalized to apply to other principalships. Nonetheless, the lessons learned from this study can yield valuable, rich information that first year principals may find pertinent and helpful to their own schools. According to Maxwell (1992), "the value of a qualitative study may depend on its lack of external generalizability in a statistical sense; it may provide an account of a setting or population that is illuminating" (p. 294).

Taking these limitations into account, the researcher next explores possible implications for further research.

Section Five: Implications for Further Research

Confining the study to the teacher perspective was a conscious choice made by the researcher in an effort to keep the study at a manageable size and scope. Thus, one possible avenue for future research would be to explore the research question from the perspectives of other key constituencies, such as students, parents, administrators, central office personnel, and other community members. Learning the perspectives of these groups would complement existing results. For instance, it would be insightful to compare the perspectives of those from different groups to determine if similarities or differences exist between and among groups, and to explore why. Having multiple perspectives from students, parents, other administrators, central office personnel, and other community members would only prove beneficial for the new principal who also serve other constituents in her community.

Another avenue for future research would be to broaden the scope of the study to include multiple localities. It would be insightful to compare the findings from this particular case study to findings from other middle schools in Corrective Action to determine which themes were recurrent and which ones were specific to a particular school. Identifying these recurrent themes would then allow the researcher to generalize her findings to a greater degree and to draw conclusions with wider applicability.

Finally, it would be interesting to study the leadership succession of a principal in a school in Corrective Action over a longer time period. In such a longitudinal study, the researcher would document and describe the professional socialization of a principal during the three-year period following her appointment. During this time, the researcher would then be able to assess if the new principal's entry had been successful and to explore if the changes that the principal had implemented had long-term and enduring effects. This information might prove beneficial for

first year principals wishing to attain a successful entry. Findings from this new study would only add another dimension to the current one.

Conclusion

In this study, the researcher found that a first year principalship in a school in Corrective Action is indeed challenging, demanding, but also highly rewarding. The study confirmed that in order for a first year principal to be successful in a school in Corrective Action, the new principal must take the time to first learn about the existing culture before attempting to change it, regardless of any mandate that may be imposed on the school. The process of learning about the school; that is, its culture, norms, and its people takes times. Thus, much of the principal's first year is spent on learning and discovering how to become the legitimate leader of the school. As the researcher found, learning how to embrace the confusion while making sense of it in such a challenging environment may not be suited for *every* first year principal. Therefore, taking the time to assess one's skills, experiences, and knowledge are most important before choosing a particular principalship.

Further, this study revealed that change is a process and a human endeavor. Therefore, in spite of the demands of the principalship and challenges that a first year principal in a school in Corrective Action may encounter, an effective leader observes her surroundings and takes the time to reflect before making decisions. She listens to her people and is respectful of their existing culture and norms. She is courageous and has a vision. Finally, she has the power to help teachers and students learn and grow in profound ways so that in the end, the school and the people within it reach higher grounds. For a first year principal, this process starts with an effective entry plan.

APPENDIX A

Email Sent to Teachers

Dear Teachers of HMS:

I am working on completing my doctoral studies in Educational Administration at Boston College. The rationale underlying this study is to learn through your feedback how best I can serve our school.

If you are interested in participating in this voluntary study, please log on to the website www.surveymonkey.com, which will begin on November 18, 2008 and close on December 2, 2008. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There will be minimal to no risk involved in the participation of the study, as your identity and responses will be anonymous. There are eight questions. Your identity and responses will remain anonymous.

To ensure confidentiality, your identity will not be revealed (as well as any information identifying our school) in the document resulting from the study. Thus, a pseudonym will be used throughout the study, as well as in any future educational publications. Upon the end of the research, all surveys will be destroyed, as the information you have provided will be used anecdotally and for the development of themes and possibly hypotheses.

If you have any questions regarding the participation of this study, please feel free to contact me at chen_lisa@X.k12.ma.us or (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for your thoughtful time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Lisa C. Chen

APPENDIX B

On-Line Survey Using the SurveyMonkey.com Service

Dear Teachers of HMS:

As stated in my email, I am working on completing my doctoral studies in Educational Administration at Boston College. The rationale underlying this study is to learn through your feedback how best a new principal can serve this school.

If you are interested in participating in this voluntary study, please answer the eight questions below. Your identity and responses will remain anonymous. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There will be minimal to no risk involved in the participation of the study, as your identity and responses will be anonymous.

To ensure confidentiality, your identity will not be revealed (as well as any information identifying our school) in the document resulting from the study. Thus, a pseudonym will be used throughout the study, as well as in any future educational publications. Upon the end of the research, all surveys will be destroyed, as the information you have provided will be used anecdotally and for the development of themes and possibly hypotheses.

If you have any questions regarding the participation of this study, please feel free to contact me at chen_lisa@X.k12.ma.us or (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for your thoughtful time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Lisa C. Chen

On-Line Survey Using the SurveyMonkey.com Service

1. *How many years in total have you been teaching?*

_____ 0 to 5 years _____ 6 to 9 years _____ 10 to 15 years _____ More than 15 years

2. *Please indicate all grades that you have taught.*

_____ K-4 _____ 5-6 _____ 7-8 _____ 9-12 _____ College Level

3. *Please indicate if you teach on-team (i.e., English, math, science, social studies, or special education) or off-team, which include all enrichments as well as the specialists in the school.*

_____ On-Team _____ Off-Team

4. What are your overall impressions of the middle school?

5. From your perspective, what are the major strengths of this school?

6. From your perspective, what are the major challenges facing the middle school? Why do you think they are important?

7. What are the most important elements of the middle school that you most want to preserve?

8. Describe the leadership that principals have provided to the middle school in the past.

Thank you for participating. I appreciate your feedback and input in this research study. I would not be able to do this without your help!

APPENDIX C

Teacher Responses to Question Four on the On-Line Survey

Table C

What are your overall impressions of the middle school? (N=36)

Teacher Responses

1. We are a group of passionate people who enjoy educating students that are going through the most challenging of adolescent years.
2. The middle school is a safe place for students to prepare for high school.
3. My impression is that the staff is tense and on guard.
4. Very professional staff!
5. We are a professional staff who know what we are doing. We care a great deal for one another!
6. It is a solidly good educational institute.
7. The middle school is waiting to go through yet another transition. It is a very difficult time for everyone.
8. Great school with teachers who are professional and care about the students. I enjoy all of the different activities and choices that we are provided.
9. It is a great school with professionals who know what they are doing. We care a great deal for one another. Many of us went to school here. We are from here. Nice kids, lots of opportunities although the budget and restructuring weigh heavily on my mind.
10. Teachers at this school are very professional and are out for the well-being of each

individual student.

11. I like the school. I like the age of the students, and I like the building. I think that the climate of the school much depends on the restructurings that have been happening for a long time. The faculty is not unified.
12. I believe that the school is providing students with a good education and preparing them for high school. Teachers and staff are really determined to do their best in order for students to succeed.
13. My overall impressions of the middle school include: a majority of students are here to participate in the learning process; a majority of the teachers are well-trained and believe that we are here to assist the students in their goal to achieve at the highest possible level; the administration firmly believes in supporting the staff and students as they strive to be the best that they can be; and a majority of the parents want to work with the students and staff to help their child reach his/her potential.
14. Great, great school. Great staff who are experienced and know what they are doing and know how to teach.
15. WE are a great school, who is respectful to everyone. We care about everyone. The MCAS does not measure who we are. We know how to teach. We are extremely dedicated people.
16. We are an excellent school. The teachers are fantastic. We have a wonderful school. The teachers know exactly what they are doing.
17. I feel that I am surrounded by dedicated, hardworking, talented colleagues. I love this school.
18. A school that prepares young students for high school and beyond, in particularly,

- those who are new to this country.
19. It has the unique distinction of being the only middle school within the district that receives all the students residing within the Town of Hope. Staff and students have the luxury of teaching and learning in a beautiful facility that offers innovative programs during and after school hours. The staff represents a mix of seasoned and new teachers, who seemingly, work well together. They are factions, however, that promote negativity, especially when changes/challenges need to be addressed. Criticism and blame get in the way of progress. Although we state the importance of a welcoming environment in which we teach/learn, many folks are rooted in resistance and, therefore, fuel the flames of negativity and discouragement across the board. Students need to be at the center all our decisions. I am not sure if this is always the case.
 20. A great building and age group to teach.
 21. There are many fine, talented and dedicated teachers at the school.
 22. Great STAFF – lots of challenges ahead of us with restructuring and the budget.
 23. Dedicated staff, strong collegiality, good communication among staff, very responsive to student needs.
 24. Older, more experienced teachers are slow to change despite the need to change.
 25. I like the concept of looping. I think children at the middle school level need the consistency.
 26. Fantastic school. Great staff who are very devoted to giving the kids of Hope a solid education. The staff, for the most part, are very supportive to each other.
 27. This school used to be a place where I willingly came to work and loved it, but the

- budget and this restructuring are very difficult to deal with!
28. Overall, the school seems to be running smoothly, and all staff seem to put the children's educational successes front and foremost in their day to day.
29. HMS has good components and those are lost in the negativity. Students seem to roam freely without supervision in the halls, and that attitude extends to the classroom. With social promotion, there is no student accountability.
30. The Middle School is a very vibrant and interesting place. Yet, there are many areas that need to be firmed up.
31. Needs work.
32. I love Middle School in all my years of teaching. Out of all the great Towns I have taught for, I love HMS!
33. Good school of educators who provide a quality education.
34. Well run with caring administrators and staff. Many services.
35. Of our middle school or middle school in general? We have a very competent STAFF and administrators!
36. This is a difficult school, but very good teachers.

APPENDIX D

Teacher Responses to Question Five on the On-Line Survey

Table D

From your perspective, what are the major strengths of this school? (N=36)

Teacher Responses

1. There are many hardworking, dedicated teachers in the building.
2. The major strengths are the looping and the quality of teachers.
3. The school has a smaller population of students to teacher ratio.
4. The strengths lie in the fact that all programs of study are strong, and the staff are concerned for the kids. Participation in areas like music, art, sports, drama, and extra curriculum give diverse students opportunities to help them establish a sense of worth and belonging.
5. Very, very qualified teachers!
6. The extra activities that were offered. The people. The professionalism. Going the extra mile. I really liked shop, and home economics, and all of those metal shops that were offered in the past and cut out from the budget.
7. The school provides many different opportunities for students to get involved, i.e., sports, clubs, music, and etc.
8. There are many highly professional teachers here.
9. A dedicated staff. A supportive administration.
10. We care about our students and take pride in what we do.
11. The teaming, the people, the teachers

12. The teachers are the best!
13. The caring, dedicated staff- everyone from the principal to the custodians. The secretaries should also be singled out for their dedication to our students.
14. Administration/faculty.
15. A variety of support programs for students including the Student Assistance Team/Mentor program. The potential for a positive, supportive teaching/learning environment. The guidance department. Positive interventions for academic and/or behavioral needs. The wide array of enrichment programs during and after school. The “team” design and looping. The department heads (ELA, SS, and Math) help to provide an educational continuum with comprehensive plans that connect the middle school with the high school.
16. Comprised of teachers and administrators who are willing to coexist with a group of students going through life changes. Teachers and administrators who challenge themselves to reach their students on a daily basis. Teachers and administrators that do what is asked of them for the betterment of their students.
17. Staff truly cares about the students. We have a diverse population of students. We hold high expectations for our students and staff.
18. HMS offers many opportunities for all types of learners: gateway, learning lab, enrichments, accelerated French. Staff members share best practices.
19. High quality staff.
20. Administration and its diversity.

21. We are a committed group who is hardworking despite being labeled 'underperforming.'

We come in everyday and play many roles in the lives of the students. We are their teachers, role models, friends, and often times, their parents.

22. The team structure. The collegiality. We are a team. WE stand up for one another! We are a strong group of teachers who care about the students and for another.

23. The major strengths of HMS are the staff. Teachers are motivated to help students, while the administration is very supportive of teachers and other staff.

24. We, as the staff, at this middle school have always been able to pull together through the many changes that we have experienced.

25. Innovative programs. Devoted staff. Great kids. Teaming. Looping.

26. The teachers are the major strengths in the middle school. Most are professionals who go above and beyond what is required.

27. Great teachers, passionate and devoted.

28. Major strengths of the school might be its staff.

29. Very qualified staff who know what they are doing.

30. The staff as a whole is the school's life-line. We can be a driving force or a force to be reckoned with. It depends on how you lead.

31. The major strengths in this school are the dedicated teachers, and the students who want to learn.

32. The Teaming is a great strength! Taking a huge school and creating little communities within creating safe and nurturing environments within a very large setting!!

33. We have some great teachers. Many problem solvers.

34. Many student services and program. Hardworking administration and staff.

35. We have a wonderful, supportive, and concerned staff who are genuinely interested in school improvement and the improvement of the school climate.
36. Different teachers and working styles.

APPENDIX E

Teacher Responses to Question Six on the On-Line Survey

Table E

From your perspective, what are the major challenges facing the middle school?

Why do you think that they are important? (N=36)

Teacher Responses

1. Although we are looked upon as a staff who does not embrace and welcome change that could further from the truth. We have adapted from being two separate building into one, united to best educate our students. We have had to deal with meeting AYP and alter our curriculum and schedule to accommodate our student needs. We have had to prove to a new superintendent and now principal that although some of our staff may gravitate towards the negative, as a whole we try to find the positive in every situation. Our biggest challenge at this time is trying to find the best way to move our building forward through a budget crisis and AYP.
2. We have to figure out how to get the most out of the limited financial resources, which we have, and I am afraid that “what is best for the student” will be lost in the budget cut.
3. The budget is our biggest issue right now. It makes me nervous now knowing if my colleagues have a job for next year. The next would be our restructuring, and then maybe the rumor mill. I stay out of it now. I stay in my room. The union meetings are hard to deal with.
4. The major challenges currently is restructuring and the budget. The fear of not knowing if I will have a job next year weighs heavily on my mind. What will the superintendent do

with restructuring? We have a changing population. We need more ELL instruction. WE have increased SPED students, and we are constantly under the gun with MCAS tests.

5. The main challenge is to unify the faculty, to make it breathe like one organism, which will bring the changes to the climate of the school. It should become a TEAM. It is important because the students would feel it and act differently.
6. Major challenges facing HMS are the budget and teachers' attitudes. Many teachers, especially those new to the system, feel that they won't be here next year, and are nervous about not having a job. This tends to affect attitudes and makes staff a bit on edge. I feel that there were no talks of the budget cuts and layoffs, then attitudes wouldn't be as negative.
7. The restructuring. The AYP. The flawed tests. Not enough time.
8. The budget crisis. The restructuring. What does that mean? My job? Does anyone care?
9. The school is too large, and a sense of community is hard to develop.
10. The major challenge facing the middle school is maintaining a positive attitude in difficult times. We, as a staff, are still working on accepting change. I believe we are getting over the hump and that teachers are being to understand the need for change and are becoming more accepting of individuals, who may use teaching strategies they do not employ but work for the individual teacher in motivating students or helping pupils understand the curriculum.
11. The budget issue is the best. Restructuring could possibly be one, but the leadership is the most important thing affecting the school. There is nothing WRONG with the school, so NOTHING needs to be changed. The changing population. It is really, really hard to teach kids who do not speak English and who have so many difficulties.

12. The challenges are financial--we might not exist as is next year--and societal: too many students from broken, drug-addled families.
13. To be able to serve the population we have enrolled.
14. FUNDING and decreasing enrollment. The school is in restructuring as the result of our not meeting AYP by our subgroup population specifically among SPED students. The staff is discouraged and fearful of what this means for the future of the school and their careers. We have an increasing number of students who are at-risk for dropping out of school, are disengaged, unmotivated and who require additional services and innovative strategies to ensure that they will remain in school. Strong leadership that is respected and valued by the faculty. Strong faculty that is respected and valued by the leadership. The district has undergone a significant number of administrative and organizational changes over the past ten years. Instead of embracing change and looking at these challenges as new opportunities for growth and development, many of our current issues (abounding with negativity) are the result of fear and frustration, mistrust and misinformation. Historically we had two middle schools, each educating students in grades 6-8. This arrangement gave students a greater sense of connection to "their" school and promoted school spirit. The two-year "plan" doesn't afford our students the chance to really engage with the school community and develop a sense of belonging. It is "just a bridge" to somewhere else - high school, the tech, private school or another option that may include dropping out when they come of age.
15. Restructuring, the budget—They affect the lives of students and teachers.
16. The budget. It is important because educating kids costs money.
17. Major challenge is openness and willingness to self-reflect.

18. More behavior management for the emotionally challenged. Need for more consistency.
19. Major challenge is willing to move forward in spite of the budget.
20. Budget constraints that will directly impact BMS, thus affecting our school climate in a negative manner. Our school's restructuring plan and improving MCAS scores across the board is stressful for all, especially math and Sped teachers.
21. Many students need to learn a basic life-sills curriculum, and DESE regulations require access to the general education curriculum. It is often frustrating to see students who lack basic skills and not being able to truly address them.
22. The challenges that the middle schools are facing are basically the same that all schools across the state are facing – a flawed testing system, which is dominating funding and failing good schools.
23. The major challenge will be the budget crisis, where teachers will be eliminated.
24. The team system takes away from a total staff identity. Perhaps departments might improve moral.
25. The perception that Admin (outside of the Middle School) has of the Middle School. It is clear that the school is though of as toxic. I think it is important to change that perception because the school is a wonderful place with some pretty amazing teachers.
26. By far the biggest challenge facing the middle school is the budget for next fiscal year. It has definitely affected school morale, as many teachers are concerned about whether they will have a job for next school year. Also programs that are offered to students will be in jeopardy because of the budget constraints.
27. A bleak future imposed upon us through no fault of our own, financial concerns, overcoming bad hires that tear at our fabric.

28. Special education is underfunded and full of laws that any school cannot successfully manage. Special ED rules the schedule, which makes middle school scheduling and teaming difficult, as well as unmotivated students who choose to fail good teachers. These students are unwilling to grow as learners in the middle school.
29. This is the age where you can truly make the difference in the life of a child. This is a time in students' lives that they are most vulnerable; the time in which there is probably the most peer pressure they'll experience. It is a time when they have hormones all over the place, and when you can watch them become more social and search for a feeling of belonging. I feel middle school is challenging because you are teaching these students so much more than just the curriculum. You are teaching the WHOLE child. Many students have so much that they are dealing with even at home.
30. The major challenges include keeping parents connected to their child's education and finding the right program for students who are having severe adjustment problems.
31. The challenges, like the school are BIG! I miss the feeling of easy communication and freedom of responsibility, which made me excited to do more.
32. School culture – without a positive school culture, you can't do more than that.
33. Parent involvement. Motivating the unmotivated child. Developing the sociology of a child. Making them a more balanced human being. Budget concerns.
34. Due to budget concerns, will the school survive?
35. Meeting the needs of an ever-changing population
36. The most challenging issues that this school faces are students who are disruptive.

APPENDIX F

Teachers Responses to Question Seven on the On-Line Survey

Table F

What are the most important elements of the middle school that you most want to preserve? (N=35)

Teacher Responses

1. The focus of teaching the “Whole student”
2. Looping and teacher autonomy!
3. I cannot answer this question.
4. One of the most important elements of HMS is the joy between student and teacher, also the safe and trusting environment for all.
5. Educating the whole child; the team approach; diversity
6. I like the looping process. I like working with a specific set of teachers.
7. The team, the school, not going up to the high school, the friendships in our school!
8. Preserving the great teachers and the teams. DO NOT BREAK UP THE TEAMS!
9. The many opportunities that students are given to get involved with outside of academics.
10. Professionalism of MOST of the teachers.
11. I think that middle school students should have the change to explore a bit. They are growing up and becoming interested in new things. Therefore, I think that enrichments, such as art, music, and phys. ed. should remain in the curriculum. These classes may trigger some students to become more interested in something and take this interest to another level.
12. Teachers are here for the students above all. In these difficult times, teachers must

be supportive of each other and not talk behind backs. Continue to develop units that challenge students to be their very best.

13. Keep everything the same!
14. The teaming. Do not change anything.
15. I love the team and my team. Do not change my team.
16. Its spirit and dedication.
17. Awareness of student needs. Our dedication to the welfare of all students.
18. The team/looping model. An excellent staff (who needs encouragement).
Enrichments – art, music, and more. Academic integrity and professionalism.
19. Teams and Looping. It is imperative that these remain in place for the development of the whole child.
20. Preservation of addressing the needs of the whole child and differentiated instruction (we are really just getting people on board with this) are important to keep.
21. Clubs.
22. Positive outlook and climate, dedication to student welfare, supportive environment.
23. My job.
24. I think the concept of looping should stay intact if possible.
25. Teaming. Looping. Programs such as SAT. The incredible Guidance department.
26. I would like to preserve the closeness that we have had as a staff and the support that we have given each other over the years.
27. Fun/Traditions of the past. Do not change the past.
28. Sports, Music, and the Arts in general.
29. Looping.

30. The co-teaching models. The energy and dedication of many of the teachers.
31. One of the most important elements to preserve is the team concept.
32. Teaming – our staff- our after school activities – anything that has to do with student safety and overall well-being (guidance, prevention).
33. Upbeat personalities among students and staff.
34. I feel that students need to have this time to discover themselves, grow to be more independent, but not get lost in the shuffle along the way. I also feel that having teams is a great ‘extended family’ for them.
35. Teams.

APPENDIX G

Teacher Responses to Question Eight on the On-Line Survey

Table G

Describe the leadership that past principals have provided to the school. (N=35)

Teacher Responses

1. The past leaders of this school trusted that their staff was doing their jobs to the best of their abilities and were supportive only when we needed their assistance. Our past leaders delegated tasks and empowered their staff to make decisions, and defended us when we made a mistake.
2. Authoritarian.
3. I felt a sense of trust that I could do my job well. Ideas were shared and always considered.
4. Involvement with services to children; Providing leadership in technology; Personal interactions with staff.
5. I have only worked for two principals at HSM. Both were strong. Both would defend you in parental conflicts, and both would support you with difficult students.
6. I really did not see Dave my last year. He was very, very hands-off. I saw the junior vice principal more in my classroom. I know that the senior vice principal was in charge, but many of us went to the junior vice principal instead. Sometimes, Dave had difficulties with certain staff. For the most part, we liked him.
7. Very laid-back and gave us lot of freedoms to do whatever we needed when we needed.

8. Personally, I don't feel like I received much from the prior administration. Specially, having to deal with a difficult and nasty divorce, I felt as though I didn't get any support or backing that made teaching easier during difficult times.
9. I was here only under one principal, Dave Rogers. He considered the teachers' well-being his priority. He brought in and maintained many programs for the students, such as SAT, Challenge Day, and Renaissance.
10. There has only been one other principal during my time here at HMS. Dave Rogers was very hands-off, especially during his last year. In fact, he never came to my room to observe my teaching. He left it up to the junior vice principal. Dave seemed to stay out of sight, maybe because he knew it was his last year, and he didn't want to cause problems with staff. I actually like it when the present administration does walk-throughs and provides me with feedback about my teaching.
11. In the John Brown and Dave Rogers eras, the leadership allowed teachers, whom they trusted to 'do their thing' in the classroom. This worked out well for teachers, who understood their roles as educators and were 'good' teachers already, but it left those who truly desired to be 'good' teachers in the cold. Not enough support was given to those teachers to assist them in becoming better teachers. Teachers knew which ones were their favorites. It was very obvious, and this created some division among staff members.
12. Laid-back. They trusted us. They let us do things without asking why. Things got done faster that way.
13. They cared and listened. They let us leave the building whenever we needed to. They did not come into our classrooms unless we asked. They respected us.

14. Principals in the past let us do what we needed to do. They did not ask questions and minded their own business. They allowed us to do our own thing and to be the professionals we are. They let us be and had professional trust in us.
15. I've worked for two principals here: Dave Rogers and you. Both have been extremely hardworking and good-hearted individuals.
16. No response.
17. Previous leadership existed in a different time and place with fewer mandates, regulations, expectations, and MCAS/AYP. Past principals were effective in their times and provided oversight and direction in a very laid-back, gentle manner. They could be tough, but generally they were approachable, amicable, communicative, positive, and supportive. They were good listeners. They encouraged and supported innovative ideas that teachers designed. They were able to delegate projects/tasks to people, whom they knew would get the job done with excellence. They helped to solve problems and find ways to avoid them. They actively participated in the design and implementation of special events that would bring the community together without micromanaging the process. They encouraged the staff to have fun, be collegial, develop friendships, and promote a positive school climate. Their door was always open - literally and figuratively. Of course, they were not perfect. No one is!
18. Past Leaders that I have been involved with at this building allowed teachers to do their own thing and to be the professionals they are. They let us be and had professional trust in us.

19. Past principals have defined their roles and delegated additional, specific roles to others.

There has been a 'chain of command,' and people were aware of the individuals to go to for specific issues.

20. John Brown – approachable, more of like a caring father figure. He was not wishy washy, which is why I liked him. He knew what decisions to make and which ones to get staff input on. Dave Rogers-was excited when he got the position but fizzled when he had health concerns. Had to take two leaves of absence, so our building lacked leadership during these times. Dave got us on board with our school improvement plan and began the process of committee work, but again this initiative fizzled. He started many initiatives all at the same time to improve our MCAS scores, so it was tough to determine which initiatives were effective.

21. Strong leadership that supported and respected staff, students, and community.

Respectful and trusting. Hands-off. Competent. They were involved with the students.

22. No response.

23. Past principals have always supported staff in most instances.

24. Dave Rogers and John Brown trusted that staff were professionals and allowed us to do our jobs. They did not come into our classrooms or ask questions. They did not need to know what we did in our classrooms. They were very hands-off, and they trusted us.

25. The past principals treated us as professionals. If we needed to leave the building early for whatever reason, we were allowed to do so without having to give a reason because they knew us as dedicated people, who did our jobs. In addition, past principals made decisions that were based on investigations, which always supported their staff. They also did not feel the need to visit our classroom unless we requested them to be present.

26. Laid-back.
27. I wouldn't know.
28. Gave us complete freedoms and let us do our own thing. Very hands-off.
29. Too laid-back or micromanaged.
30. Dave Rogers instilled trust in their staff, while John Brown caused friction among staff.
31. Appropriate and genuine relationships with parents, staff, and students.
32. Trusted that we knew what we were doing, hardworking, and professional.
33. I do not know.
34. Delegatory, Made us feel comfortable and safe, made us feel confident.
35. Laissez faire – Let us be.

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